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The Phonological Analysis of English Front Vowels in the Spoken English of Selected Undergraduates of Federal University Wukari

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Abstract

This research analyses the English front vowels in the spoken English of selected undergraduates of Federal University Wukari. Therefore, 120 respondents were randomly selected. Giles and Coupland's (Giles and Smith, 1979) Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) and Lado's (Lado, 1957) Contrastive Phonology Theory (CPT) were used as the theoretical frameworks. CAT was used to determine the mutual phonological intelligibility and accessibility of the respondents while CPT was used to describe the systems of languages by comparing them with others and predicting the areas of difficulties so that the second language learners can ease the difficulties. Questionnaires and read-aloud task were the research instruments used for data collection. The findings revealed that majority of the respondents found it very difficult to correctly articulate the front vowels in the test items thereby pronounced 'veto', 'liberation', 'jeopardise', and 'timbre' as [veto], [laibireiʃən], [dʒepadaiz], and [timba] instead of /'vi:təʊ/, /lɪbər'eɪʃən/, /'dʒepədəɪz/, and /tæmbə/ respectively. Also, respondents' overall performance of 21.7% shows that they had problems in articulating the English front vowels pronouncing /i:/ as [ɛ], /ɪ/ as [u], /e/ as [i:]; and /æ/ as [i]. Hence, recommendations were made in a bid to better ESL speakers' pronunciation proficiency.

Keywords: front vowels, phonology, phoneme, grapheme, pronunciation

Background to the Study

In a speech community, language is the vehicle with which people express their thoughts and ideas in form of speech or writing. According to Sapir (1921: 18), “language is a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols.” Also, Cruttenden (1980: 4-5) describes language thus:

...a system of conventional symbols used for communication by a whole community, the pattern of conventions covers a system of significant sound units, the inflection and the arrangement of words and the association of meaning with words...

In my opinion, language is a tool by which human beings relate to one another with the use of conventional but arbitrary signs. It can be inferred from the scholars above that there are some features which are common to languages. Some of these are arbitrariness, conventionality, and natural acquisition. For instance, any child that is born into a society naturally acquires the language of its environment without any stress. As a matter of fact, it will be very difficult for you to easily remember how you acquired your mother tongue or first language. The reason is because the process of acquisition is usually without any stress. Therefore, its description will be equally easy. But if the same child attempts to learn the second language, definitely it will learn with some amount of dedication and determination. The degree of success will depend upon some factors which may include the quality of the person he takes as his model, the appropriateness of the environment for learning, and the child’s inborn ability at language learning. You can see that while you acquired your first language (indigenous language) without stress, you are still striving to learn the English language which is the second language in Nigeria.

Presently, over one billion people around the world speak English as a second language. Unarguably, in a second language situation like this, there are types of variety of English language across the world that is considered as ‘new Englishes’. That is why Holmes (2013: 194) defined new Englishes as ‘varieties which have developed in post-colonial societies where the colonial powers have been displaced but the legacy of English remains’. These varieties of English are called institutionalised and non-institutionalised. Adeyanju (2007: 3) explains that the types of English like South African English, Australian English, New Zealand English, American English, and British English can be considered as ‘institutionalised’ or ‘established’ varieties of English, while African Englishes, such as Ghanaian and Nigerian English are the non-institutionalised or non-established varieties. But as a result of the focus of this study, our focus is ‘Nigerian English’ or the English spoken in Nigeria. This type and status of English spoken in Nigeria is categorised as ‘English as a second language’ because the speakers had earlier acquired their first language, mother tongue or indigenous language.

As a matter of fact, Nigeria is a multilingual nation that breeds many indigenous languages. By implication, it becomes totally difficult for them to actualise correctness at the pronunciation of English sounds. As at this juncture, due to unique linguistic backgrounds that are evident in Nigeria, many Nigerians still experience difficulty in the course of articulating some English phonemes especially vowel sounds. Based on the foregoing, this work sets out to examine the articulation of English front vowels and its implications on speech communication among the selected undergraduates of Federal University of Wukari, Taraba State.

Previous studies on the phonological problems of Nigerian speakers of ESL speakers/learners concentrate more on the effects of MT interference, without paying much attention on the wrong articulation of some of the phonemes especially the front vowels in the north-eastern part of Nigeria. Although there are some scholars who work on this area, especially on the area of phoneme articulation

by speakers or learners of ESL in Nigeria. Some of these scholars include Akinjobi (2004), Tsojon and Aji (2014) and Ogunrinde (2017). Akinjobi mainly looks at the weakness of the vowels without considering the other possible phonological challenges faced during the articulation of vowels, but this study intends to fill the gap. Also, Tsojon and Aji (2014) work only on Jukun-Wapan speakers' pronunciation in the spoken English but this research intends to cover some other tribes that are in north-eastern part of Nigeria where the participants are selected. Likewise, Ogunrinde (2017) works on the articulation of alveolar trill /r/ by Tiv speakers of English. Here, the emphasis is only on a particular consonant but this study intends to look at the vowels specifically the front vowels which might pose more problems to learners of English. However, they do not lay more emphasis on English front vowels and speakers of English in north-eastern part of Nigeria. Hence, this work intends to fill this lacuna by phonologically analysing the front vowels in the spoken English of undergraduates of Federal University Wukari in the north-eastern part of Nigeria.

The specific objectives of the study are to describe the respondents' realisations of the front vowels; determine the respondents' performance based on their demographic information; and identify the test item(s) that pose(s) more pronunciation difficulties to the respondents. This study is significant not just to the undergraduates of Federal University Wukari but also to the second language learners of English. It shows how it is important for students to see the need in mastery of sounds to enhance effective communication, and it will also be of great benefit to lecturers especially those that specialise in phonetics and phonology to identify the areas of difficulty in the spoken English of the undergraduates of Federal University of Wukari.

Literature Review

The English vowel sounds

Vowel sounds are speech sounds that are produced without any audible obstruction of the airstream from the lungs and other speech articulators, unlike consonant sounds which are produced with total or partial obstruction of the air. In other words, English vowel sounds are speech sounds produced by an articulation with little or no constriction of the mouth passage. In the production of a vowel sound, there is free flow of air from the lungs through the oral cavity. Although, the vocal cord could be raised, it is not raised to form contact with any other organ as to obstruct free flow of the airstream. Since all vowels are voiced phonemes, they are produced with a voiced pulmonic regressive speech mechanism. There is vibration at the vocal folds in their productions.

However, vowels are described considering the shape of the oral cavity, which depends on the position of the highest point of the tongue during the production. The twenty vowels of English are divided into twelve pure vowels called monophthongs (7 short and 5 long vowels) and eight diphthongs (3 centring and 5 closing diphthongs). As earlier mentioned, the vowels include /ɪ/, /e/, /ɒ/, /ʊ/, /æ/, /ʌ/, /ə/, /i:/, /ɜ:/, /ɔ:/, /u:/, /ɑ:/, /ɪə/, /eə/, /ʊə/, /eɪ/, /ɔɪ/, /aɪ/, /aʊ/ and /əʊ/.

Classification of English pure vowels using lip and tongue

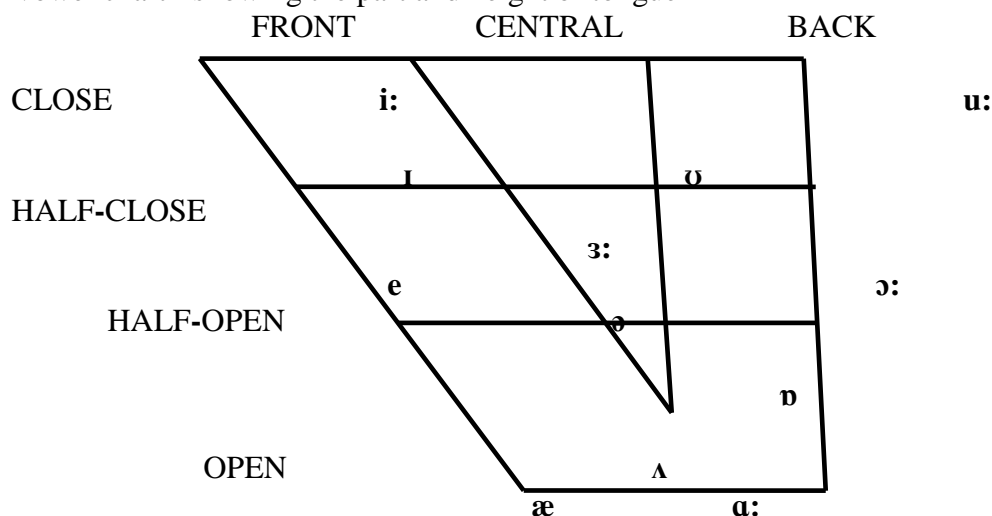
Generally, there are basically three factors used in the classification of the vowel sounds of different languages. These include the tongue height, tongue part, and lip posture. Classification of vowels using tongue height is when the tongue is raised high to the roof of the mouth, but not to the point that brings friction. The height of the tongue in the production of vowel sounds can be close/high (close/high vowels are produced when the tongue is at the highest possible point), open/low (open/low vowels are produced when the tongue is at the lowest possible position) or be at intermediate levels

(intermediate vowels are produced when the tongue is in-between the highest and the lowest positions, that is, half-close (close mid or mid-high) or half-open (open-mid or mid-low).

The second classification is the tongue part. This means the part of the tongue that is used in the production of vowel sounds. The part of the tongue used can be front (the front part of the tongue is used in the production of the front vowels), back (the back part of the tongue is used in the production of the back vowels) and central (the central part of the tongue is used in the production of the central vowels).

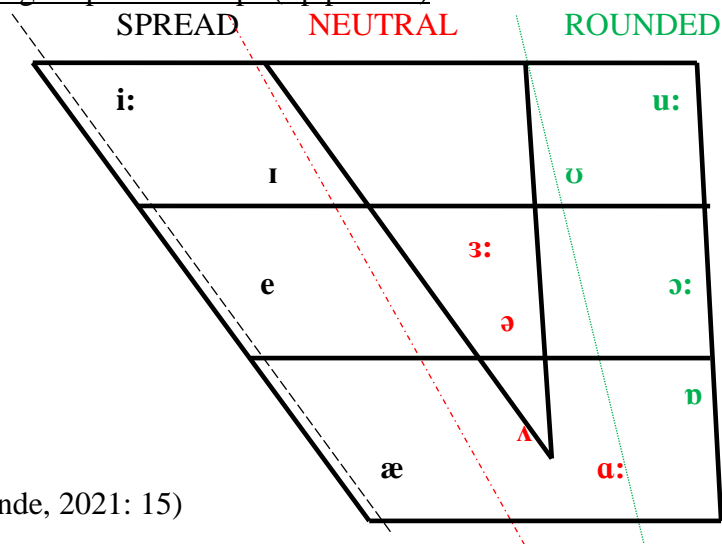
The third classification is shapes of the lip or lip postures. This describes the shapes of the lips in the course of producing vowel sounds. The lips can assume three main postures in the course of producing a vowel sound, that is, it can assume spread, rounded or unrounded (neutral) position (Ogunrinde, 2017: 13). See diagrams in figures1 and 2 for clearer explanation.

Fig. 1: English vowel chart I showing the part and height of tongue



Culled from (Ogunrinde, 2021: 14)

Fig. 2: A chart showing shapes of the lips (lip posture)



Culled from (Ogunrinde, 2021: 15)

Likewise, the table below presents the description of English pure vowels according to their descriptions in the above diagrams.

Table1: Description of English pure vowels

Pure vowels	Description
/i:/	front close spread
/ɪ/	front half-close spread
/e/	front half-open spread
/æ/	front open spread
/ɑ:/	back open neutral
/ɒ/	back open rounded
/ɔ:/	back half-open rounded
/ʊ/	back half-close rounded
/u:/	back close rounded
/ʌ/	central open neutral
/ɜ:/	central half-close neutral
/ə/	central half-open neutral

On the basis of vowel nucleus, vowel sounds are classified into three divisions which include monophthongs, diphthongs, and triphthongs. The table below explains better.

Table 2: Tabular representation of division of vowel sounds

Table 17: Representation of English Vowels in IPA Symbols						
S/N	Monophthongs		Diphthongs		Triphthongs	
	Sound	Word & Transcription	Sound	Word & Transcription	Sound	Word & Transcription
1	/i:/	seat /si:t/	/eɪ/	day /deɪ/	/eɪə/	sprayer /spreɪə/
2	/ɪ/	sit /sɪt/	/aɪ/	buy /baɪ/	/aɪə/	fire /faɪə/
3	/e/	bed /bed/	/ɔɪ/	noise /nɔɪz/	/ɔɪə/	royal /rɔɪə/
4	/æ/	man /mæn/	/əʊ/	go /gəʊ/	/əʊə/	sower /səʊə/
5	/ɑ:/	cart /kɑ:t/	/aʊ/	cow /kaʊ/	/aʊə/	sour /saʊə/
6	/ɒ/	cot /kɒt/	/ɪə/	dear /dɪə/	Five Triphthongs	
7	/ɔ:/	court /kɔ:t/	/eə/	share /ʃeə/		
8	/ʊ/	pull /pʊl/	/ʊə/	pure /pjʊə/		
9	/u:/	pool /pu:l/	Eight Diphthongs / Gliders			
10	/ʌ/	come /kʌm/				
11	/ɜ:/	bird /bɜ:d/				
12	/ə/	above /əbʌv/				
Twelve Monophthongs / Pure Vowels						

Extracted from (Aboki, 2017: 11)

The English graphemes and phonemes

In English, letter is the basic element of written language. The name grapheme is given to the letter or combination of letters that represents a phoneme. For example, the word 'ghost' contains five letters and four graphemes (<gh>, <o>, <s>, and <t>), representing four phonemes: /g/, /əʊ/, /s/, and /t/ (/gəʊst/). There is much more variability in the structure of written language than there is in spoken languages. Whereas, all spoken languages utilise a basic distinction between consonants and vowels, there is no such common thread to the world's written languages. It is believed, beginners are taught grapheme-phoneme correspondences when they begin elementary schools. These associations are easier to learn if students already know the names of letters, because most letter names include relevant sounds, for example /t/ is 'tee', and /k/ is 'kay'. There are about forty distinctive phonemes in English but seventy letters or letter combinations to symbolise phonemes. This makes pronouncing spellings easier than writing correct spellings.

Graphemes are said to be the smallest components in orthography and it causes a change in meaning. In English alphabet, the switch from 'cat' to 'bat' introduces a meaning change. Therefore, **c** and **b** represent different graphemes. It is usual to transcribe graphemes within angle brackets, to show their special status: <c>, . The main graphemes of English are the twenty-six units that make up the alphabet. As a matter of fact, phonemes are not realisable without graphemes. As earlier discussed, angle brackets < > are used for graphemes or inverted commas ' ', for instance, <t> or 't' while slanting lines / / are for phonemes, for instance, /t/.

A Grapheme is a symbol used to identify a phoneme; it is a letter or group of letters representing the sound. A grapheme can be one letter, for instance, <c> in 'car' where it makes a consonant /k/ sound. Also, a two-letter grapheme is in "team" where the <ea> makes a long /i:/ sound. It can be a three-letter. Likewise, a four-letter grapheme can be found in the word "eight" where "eigh" makes a diphthong /eɪ/ sound. Moreover, a grapheme can have a zero phonemic representation, for instance, grapheme <t> is silent in 'beret'. To confuse everyone, some phonemes (sounds) can be spelled with different graphemes (letters). The <k> sound can be spelled with a <c>, <k>, or <ck> grapheme. Also, quite a few graphemes can be used for the long /i:/ phoneme, for instance, <e> in 'regal', <oe> in 'amoeba', <ey> in 'key' and others.

Graphemes of English front vowels

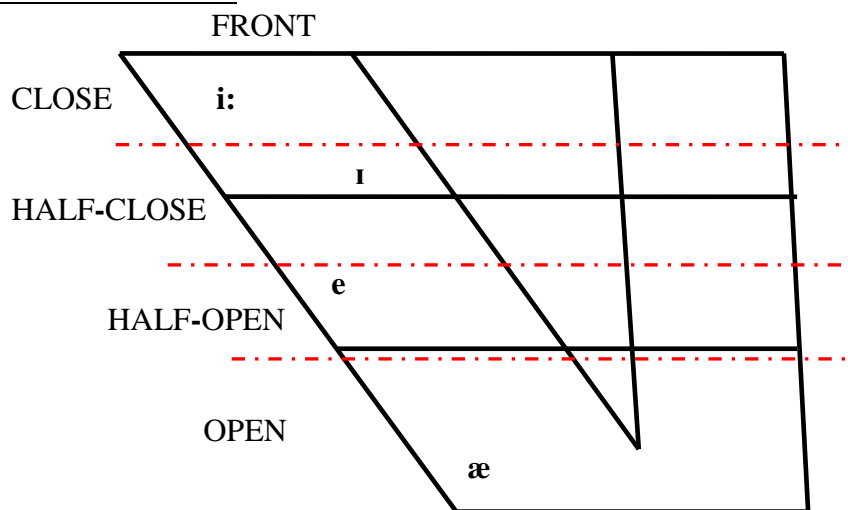
The following are the various graphemes of English front vowels. In the first place, the ones for front half-close spread /ɪ/ are <i> in 'liberation', <e> in 'examination', <a> in 'village', <u> in 'busy', <ui> in 'circuit', <y> in 'symbol' and <o> in 'women'. Also, the graphemes for front close spread /i:/ include <ee> in 'wheel', <e-e> in 'athlete', <e> in 'tragedian', <ea> in 'wean', <ei> in 'receipt', <ie> in 'grief', <eo> in 'people', <oe> in 'subpoena', <ae> in 'alumnae', <ey> in 'key', <uay> in 'quay', <i> in 'oblique' and <i-e> in 'police'. Furthermore, graphemes for front open spread /æ/ are <a> in 'sand', <ai> in 'plait' and <i> in 'timbre'. Moreover, the ones for front half-open spread /e/ are <e> in 'help', <ea> in 'meadow', <ai> in 'said', <ay> in 'says', <ie> in 'friend', <ei> in 'leisure', <u> in 'bury', <eo> in 'jeopardise', <a> in 'many' and <ae> in 'haemorrhage' (Ogunrinde, 2016).

Front vowels

Front vowels are produced with the front part of the tongue raised towards the hard palate. Its defining characteristics being that the tongue is positioned as far in front as possible in the mouth without creating a constriction that would make it a consonant. Front vowels are also called 'bright vowels' because they are perceived as sounding brighter than the back vowels (Williamson, 2015).

Therefore, the front vowels include /i:/, /ɪ/, /e/ and /æ/. These four vowels are classified as the ‘front vowels’ because the front part of the tongue is involved in their production. However, the *figure 1* above illustrates the part of the tongue used in the production of the front vowels and *figure 3* below shows the front vowel chart.

Fig. 3: English front vowel chart



Culled from (Ogunrinde, 2021: 15)

From the above diagram, it is obvious that the front vowels are distributed in the vowel space along the vertical tongue height axis (from high/close to low/open). They are all made with spread (unrounded) lips.

Description of English front vowels

In the production of front close spread /i:/, the front of the tongue is raised to a height slightly below and behind the front close position; it should be noted that the lips are spread; also the tongue is tense, with the side rims making a firm contact with the upper molars. The quality is nearer to cardinal vowel [i] than to cardinal vowel [e] (See *figure 4* below). The /i:/ sound does not normally occur in a syllable closed by /ŋ/ (Cruttenden, 2001: 105). For instance, consider the following words and their transcriptions with syllable divisions: ‘being’ /bi:.ŋ/, ‘been’ /bi:n/, ‘bing’ /bɪŋ/, ‘bin’ /bɪn/.

Fig. 4: Cardinal and pure vowels chart

Note: the big dot (●) shows the exact spot where the cardinal vowel is placed and the small dot (•) is for English pure vowel.

For the production of front half-open spread /e/, the front of the tongue is raised between the half-close and half-open positions; the lips are loosely spread and slightly wider apart than for /ɪ/; the wide rims making a slight contact with the upper molars. The quality lies between that of cardinal vowel [e] and that of cardinal [ɛ] (*see figure 4 above*). Mind you, /e/ does not occur in the final and open syllables.

In the articulation of /æ/ sound, the mouth is more open than for /e/; the front of the tongue is raised to a position halfway just above open, with the side rims making a very slightly contact with the back upper molars; the lips are neutrally open. This vowel has become more open recently, previously being nearer to cardinal vowel [ɛ] where now it is now close to cardinal vowel [a] (*see figure 4 above*). This traditionally short vowel is now generally longer in RP than the other short vowels /ɪ, e, ʌ, ɒ, ʊ/. Such lengthening is particularly apparent before voiced consonants, eg in *bad, man, cab, bag, badge*; /æ/ in this these contexts is almost equivalent to the long vowels, so *badge* /bædʒ/ and *barge* /ba:dʒ/ have vowels of similar length (Cruttenden, 2001: 111).

The theories employed are Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) and Contrastive Phonology Theory (CPT), CAT provides a wide-range framework aimed at predicting and explaining many of the adjustments individuals make to create, maintain, or decrease social distance in interaction, especially in an ESL environment like Nigeria. Giles and Smith (Giles and Smith, 1979) developed it. It explores the different ways in which we accommodate our communication, our motivations for doing so, and the consequences. This theory is concerned with the links between language, context, and identity. It focuses on the patterns of convergence, which is explained below. Convergence is considered the historical core of CAT. It refers to a strategy whereby individuals adapt their communicative behaviours in terms of a wide range of linguistics (for example, speech rate, accents), paralinguistic (for example, pauses, utterance length), and nonverbal features (for example, smile, gazing) in a way as to

become more similar to their interlocutors' behaviour. For instance, in a L2 environment like Nigeria, speakers can converge in the articulation of words that have silent letters. If speaker 'A' who is a Nigerian that has been well and specially trained in this area, and speaker 'B' is on the contrary, though a Nigerian. In their dialogue, speaker 'B' says, 'Give me the timbre [timba]' instead of pronouncing /tæmbə/. In Giles and Smith's theory, speaker 'A' has to converge or shift his/her speech pattern to resemble his/her interlocutor's for a successful communication in their conversation.

The second theory employed is CPT. It is founded by Structural Linguistics and Behaviourist. This theory was propounded by Lado and Fries. These scholars were concerned with why some elements of the second language (L2) pose more difficulties to learners. This approach describes the systems of languages by comparing them with others and predicting the areas of difficulties so that the L2 learners can ease the difficulties. According to Lado (1957), the best approach to handle the problem of negative transfer is to compare the systems of first language and second language. He explains further that this is the best way to ease the L2 learning difficulties. For instance, according to CPT's point of view, all these wrong pronunciations of sounds are mainly because most of these sounds are not attested in the sound systems of respondents' language. For instance, English front vowels like /i:/, /ɪ/ and /æ/ are not present in Yoruba sound system. But what we have in Yoruba sound system are /a/, /e/, /ɛ/, /i/, /o/, and /ɔ/. Likewise, in Yoruba or other Nigerian language sound system, there is *grapheme to phoneme* total correspondence making it simple to learn or pronounce (<a> → /a/ in 'ayò' = joy) but reverse is the case in English. A grapheme in English may have many phonemic representations (<a> → /ɪ/ in 'image', /ɔ:/ in 'falcon', /ɒ/ in 'swallow', /ɑ:/ in 'father', /æ/ in 'pat', /ə/ in 'batsman'). English orthography or sound systems is complex that is why some respondents wrongly pronounced word like 'veto' as [vɛto] instead of /'vi:təʊ/ because <e> is pronounced as /ɛ/ in some Nigerian languages.

Methodology

The research is set to carry-out a phonological analysis of the English front vowels in the spoken English of selected undergraduates of Federal University Wukari. The method used in collecting data was administering of questionnaire with read-out task. This was used to obtain information from the respondents. The population of this research work is made up of twelve departments (i.e. Accounting, English, Medical Laboratory Science, Physics) from six faculties with twenty respondents from each faculty (10 in each department). Thus, random sampling techniques were adopted in collecting the data from one hundred and twenty (120) respondents which comprises sixty male and sixty female respondents respectively. The data were obtained through text-based instrument to test the articulation of the front vowels in the spoken English of the respondents. The questionnaire was designed to test the articulation of the respondents reading of the test items and a *voice recorder application* was used in recording the respondents' reading of the test items in sentence-contexts and in words-in-isolation in order to assess their phonological processing skills; and to determine whether they are mindful of the vowels which is considered as the prominent challenge of the respondents. The question was classified into three sections: Section 'A' contains the respondents' background information which includes sex, department/faculty and their interest in learning spoken English. Section 'B' contains precisely twelve short sentences (sentence-contexts) involving the test items while Section 'C' contains twenty-four test items of words-in-isolation.

In obtaining data, the respondents were administered questionnaire which comprises read-aloud task which contains short sentences to enable the researcher to discover the problems of the respondents in articulating the vowels. The researcher closely observed his respondents while reading the test items and observed that the respondents were responding greatly not mindful or conscious of the spelling of

words. The researcher's personal involvement in the exercise made it easier to gather data needed for the study. However, the distribution and collection of data were done the same day in each of the departments. A total number of 120 undergraduates were selected from the twelve departments. The eight test items are made up of two words having one example of front vowels, that is, two words multiplied by four front vowels equals to eight test items. The 120 respondents were made to read eight short sentences containing the test items. Descriptive analysis using simple percentage method was used to analyse the data. The data collected were perceptually analysed to identify the respondents' elicitation of the test items. Descriptive analysis accounts for the number of frequency recorded in respondents' performances of their correct and incorrect articulations of the test items. The descriptive analysis is presented in simple percentage below. The total number of responses on each item in the questionnaire is rated 120. The respondents, who have similar or the same responses to a particular question, are summed up and placed over 100 multiplied by 120. For example, $\frac{x}{120} \times \frac{100}{1}$ where x is equal to the total number of the respondents with similar or correct responses on a particular item and 120 is equalled to the total number of the respondents while 100 is equal to the total percentage.

Results and Discussion

The analysis of respondents' performance based on their demographic information, their performance in the articulation of all the test items with their overall performance, and their performance in words-in-isolation and sentence-contexts are succinctly discussed. Similarly, the test items posing more difficulties to the respondents are unfolded. Likewise, the semantic implications of the test items are discussed below.

Respondents' performance based on their demographic information (sex, departments and interest)

The sample population of the study comprised of 60 males and 60 females (sex). It was discovered that out of the total obtainable scores of 960 for male and 960 for female respectively, the female students performed better than their male counterparts. The female respondents scored 220 out of 960 (33.3%) in the articulation of the test items (front vowels) in sentence-contexts and words-in-isolation respectively, while the male respondents scored only 196 (20.4%). See the table below for better illustration.

Table 3: Respondents' performance based on their sex

Variable	No of resp.	No. of the test items	Articulation of the Respondents		Total obtainable scores per variables (male and female)
			Correct Frequency (percentage)	Incorrect Frequency (percentage)	
Male	60	Sentences-context (8) Words-in-isolation (8) (8 + 8 = 16 x 60 = 960)	196 (20.4%) $(\frac{196}{960} \times 100 = 20.4\%)$	764 (79.6%) $(\frac{764}{960} \times 100 = 79.6\%)$	960 (16x60=960)
Female	60	Sentences-context (8) Words-in-isolation (8) (8 + 8 = 16 x 60 = 960)	220 (22.9%) $(\frac{220}{960} \times 100 = 22.9\%)$	740 (77.1%) $(\frac{740}{960} \times 100 = 77.1\%)$	960 (16x60=960)

Total	120	960 + 960 = 1,920	196 + 220 = 416	764 + 740 = 1,504	1,920
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The result of this analysis further showed that despite the poor performance of both, the females had an edge over the males having 22.9% success against the males' 20.4% performance. The result of this finding is in consonance with the view of scholars like Steinberg (1993) who asserts that the females are more endowed with language proficiency than their male counterparts.

In addition, analysis of the respondents' performance against their departments was carried out thus. The randomly selected departments were twelve. The result of the analysis in the table below revealed that out of the total obtainable scores of 160 in each department, the respondents from English Department scored 92 (57.5%) which is an above average performance against their counterparts in other departments especially respondents from the Medical Laboratory Science with a very low score of 10 (6.3%). The better performance of respondents from the English could be as a result of special training acquired by the students in phonetics and phonology courses using language laboratory equipment or software often in a bid to attaining a native-like accent. This made them to be conversant with the correct pronunciation of some of those test items (front vowels). See the table below for better explanation.

Table 4: Respondents' performance based on their departments

Variables		No of resp.	Articulation of the Respondents		Total Obtainable scores per Departments (10 respondents; 8 test items in isolation + 8 in sentences = 16)
Faculty	Department		Correct Frequency (percentage)	Incorrect Frequency (percentage)	
Human-ities	English	10	92 (57.5%)	68 (42.5%)	160 (10×16=160)
	Sociology	10	38 (23.8%)	122 (76.2%)	160 (10×16=160)
Manage-ment	Bus Admin.	10	28 (17.5%)	132 (82.5%)	160 (10×16=160)
	Accounting	10	20 (12.5%)	140 (87.5%)	160 (10×16=160)
Pure & Applied Science	Micro-biology	10	38 (23.8%)	122 (76.2%)	160 (10×16=160)
	Physics	10	52 (32.5%)	108 (67.5%)	160 (10×16=160)
Agric. & Life Sci.	Agric Econs & Ext.	10	36 (22.5%)	124 (77.5%)	160 (10×16=160)
	Animal Prod. & health	10	22 (13.8%)	138 (86.2%)	160 (10×16=160)
Educat-ion	Physics Education	10	20 (12.5%)	140 (87.5%)	160 (10×16=160)
	Biology Education	10	24 (15%)	136 (85%)	160 (10×16=160)

Health Science	Medical Science	Lab.	10	10 (6.3%)	150 (93.7%)	160 (10×16=160)
	Medicine & Surgery		10	36 (22.5%)	124 (77.5%)	160 (10×16=160)
Total			120	416 (21.7%)	1,504 (78.3%)	1, 920

Moreover, this section presents the analysis of the respondents against their levels of interest in learning oral English. This is to ascertain if one's level of interest in a particular field of study affects one's performance in the articulation of test items. Below is the table that explains the result of the findings better.

Table 5: Respondents' performance based on their levels of interest

Variable	No of resp	Articulation of the Respondents		Total obtainable scores per Test Items
		Correct frequency (percentage)	Incorrect frequency (percentage)	
Interested	22	154 (43.8%) (154/352×100= 43.8%)	198 (56.2%) (198/352×100 =56.2%)	352 (22×16=352)
Fairly interested	79	302 (23.9%) (302/1264×100=23.9%)	962 (76.1%) (962/1264×100=76.19%)	1,264 (79×16=1,264)
Not interested	19	48 (15.8%) (48/304×100=15.8%)	256 (84.2%) (256/304×100=84.2%)	304 (19×16=304)
Total	120	525	1,395	1,920

Considering the analysis in the table above, it is clear that the respondents' levels of interest in learning oral English had an effect on their performance. The result revealed that those with high level of interest (interested) recorded 43.8%, this is above 40% pass mark, having an upper hand over their counterparts with little level of interest (fairly interested) which recorded 23.9% poor performance and those without interest (not interested) with a very poor performance of 15.8%. This is as a result of the fact that people naturally put in their effort in learning whatever they develop interest in.

Respondents' performance in the articulation of all the test items

This section presents the analysis of respondents' performance based on each of the test items which include 'veto', 'penalise', 'liberate', 'women', 'jeopardise', 'meadow' 'plait', and 'timbre'. The analysis is presented below.

Based on the result from the table below, 70 (14.6%) was recorded as the correct articulation which is an evidence of a poor performance. In other words, majority of the respondents pronounced the front close spread /i:/ as [ε]. This is affirmed when they pronounced 'veto' and 'penalise' as [veto], [penalias] instead of /vi:təʊ/, /pi:nəlaɪz/ respectively. This could be as a result of *grapheme to phoneme total correspondence* in their MTs such as Yoruba, Ibo, Hausa and others. For instance, grapheme <e> in Yoruba is pronounced as /ε/, Yoruba speakers among the respondents are likely to pronounce it this way (see table 6 below for better explanation).

One hundred and twenty respondents actively participated in the pronunciation of 'liberate' and 'women'. It was revealed that out of 480 times when the test items were pronounced, only 90 (18.7%) were the correct elicitations. Instead of articulating 'liberate', 'women' as /'libəreit/, /'wɪmɪn/, they wrongly pronounced them as [laibireit], [wumɛn]: /i/ → [ai], [u], [ε]. This could be as a result of the respondents' MT interference and over-generalisation problem. In the first place, this is a problem of

MT interference from respondents' L1 to English. For instance, graphemes <o> and <e> in some Nigerian languages (i.e. Yoruba) are pronounced as [o] and [ɛ]. Secondly, it is an over-generalisation problem because respondents assumed that grapheme <i> in 'liberate' is pronounced as /aɪ/ as in /'laɪbəreɪt/. It was revealed that respondents over-generalised or assumed that inasmuch the <i> in 'library' is pronounced /aɪ/, therefore, <i> in 'liberate' should also be pronounced as /aɪ/. This shows that respondents had problem in the articulation of close front spread /ɪ/ in 'liberate' and 'women'. The table 6 below explains better.

The result also showed that out of 480 times when 'plait' and 'timbre' were pronounced, only 102 (21.2%) was recorded as the correct elicitation. This shows that respondents found it difficult to articulate front open spread /æ/ correctly instead they pronounced it as [ei] or [i] as the case may be. In other words, they pronounced them as [pleit] and [timba] instead of /'plæt/ and /tæmbə/. This could be as a result of over generalisation. Many respondents assumed that once the grapheme <i> in 'timber' is pronounced /ɪ/ (/tɪmbə/), therefore, the grapheme <i> in 'timbre' should also have the same pronunciation. See the table below for details.

It was revealed that out of 480 times when 120 respondents pronounced 'jeopardise' and 'meadow', only 154 frequencies of correct pronunciation was recorded which stood at 32.1% poor performance. This is an indication that respondents also found it difficult to correctly articulate the front half-open spread /e/ in 'jeopardy' and 'meadow' instead they pronounced it as [io], [ɛ] or [i:]. Analysis showed that 'jeopardise', and 'meadow' were pronounced as [dʒiɒpadaɪz], [dʒɛpadaɪz] and [mi:do] as the case may be instead of /'dʒɛpədaɪz/, /'medəʊ/. The table below explains it better.

Table 6: Respondents' performance in the articulation of all the test items

Test items (2 in isolation + 2 in contexts = 4)	Respondents' Articulation				Correct and incorrect sounds	No. of Resp. (120) and total no of the test items' elicitations (4)
	Correct	Score (%)	Incorrect	Scores (%)		
veto, penalise	/ˈvi:təʊ/ /ˈpi:nəlaɪz/	70 (14.6%)	[veto], [penalais]	410 (85.4%)	/i:/ → [ɛ]	120 x 4 = 480
liberation, women	/ˈlɪbəreɪt/ /ˈwɪmɪn/	90 (18.7%)	[laɪbireɪt], [wumɛn]	390 (81.9%)	/ɪ/ → [aɪ], [u], [ɛ]	
jeopardise, meadow	/ˈdʒɛpədaɪz/ /ˈmedəʊ/	154 (32.1%)	[dʒiɒpadaɪz] , [dʒɛpadaɪz], [mi:do]	326 (67.9%)	/e/ → [io], [ɛ], [i:]	
plait, timbre	/ˈplæt/ /ˈtæmbə/	102 (21.2%)	[pleit], [timba]	378 (78.8%)	/æ/ → [ei], [i]	

Respondents' overall performance in the articulation of all the test items

The overall performance of the respondents in the test items comprises the correct and incorrect articulations. The table below presents a better illustration:

Table 7: Overall performance of respondents in the articulation of all the test items

Test items (2 in isolation + 2 in sentence = 4) 4 x 120 = 480	Front vowels (Tested)	Respondents' Articulation scores				No of resp.
		correct	%	Incorrect	%	
veto, penalise	i:	70	14.6	410	85.4	120
liberate, women	ɪ	90	18.7	390	81.3	120
jeopardise, meadow	e	154	32.1	326	67.9	120
plait, timbre	æ	102	21.2	378	78.8	120
Total		416 Correct Articulation	21.7	1,504 Incorrect Articulation	78.3	
Grand total (480x4=1,920)		1,920				

From the analysis explicated in the above table, out of 1,920 obtainable scores, the respondents scored 416 representing 21.7% as the correct articulation in the test items. Also, respondents scored 1,504 representing 78.3% as the incorrect articulation. Going by this overall performance (21.7%), it is obvious that respondents had a serious problem in the articulation of English words having front vowels and this is an impending problem which needs to be addressed in order to prevent communication impairment or barrier in the spoken English among the undergraduates of Federal University Wukari.

Respondents' performance in articulation of test items in words-in-isolation and sentence-contexts

This section reveals that the respondents' performances in the articulation of the four front vowels in the test items. The test items are categorised into two groups: the eight test items which include the 4 English front vowels are arranged in words in isolation, and the second group involves the same set of words but used in different sentence-contexts. The front vowels tested are /i:/, /ɪ/, /e/ and /æ/. Likewise, the words used include 'veto', 'penalise', 'liberate', 'women', 'plait', 'timbre', 'jeopardise', and 'meadow'.

The study equally showed the performance of the respondents in the articulation of the test items based on words-in-isolation and sentence-contexts. The correct articulation of the respondents stood at 21.7%. Out of the total obtainable scores of the correct articulation of 416 (21.7%), their performance in words-in-isolation was 281 (14.6%) while those in sentence-contexts was 135 (7.1%). Despite the overall performance of the respondents which was very poor, respondents performed in the articulation of the front vowels in words-in-isolation than in sentence-contexts. The table below explains better:

Table 8: Respondents' performance in words-in-isolation and sentence-contexts

Test items	Front vowels (Tested)	Respondents' Articulation scores		No of resp.	No. of times test items articulated
		Isolation 2 test items in words-in-isolation x 120 resps = 240	Sentence Contexts 2 test items in sentence-contexts x 120 resps = 240		

		Correct articulation	%	Correct articulation	%		(480)
veto, penalise	i:	55	11.5	15	3.1	120	480
liberate, women	ɪ	52	10.8	38	7.9	120	480
jeopardise, meadow	e	90	18.8	64	13.3	120	480
plait, timbre	æ	84	17.5	18	3.7	120	480
Total		281 Correct Articulation	14.6	135 Correct Articulation	7.1	120	1,920
Grand total		416 (21.7%)					1,920

As show above, respondents performed better in words-in-isolation than in sentence-contexts; that is 281 (14.6%) against 135 (7.1%) as the correct articulation. The reason that could be attributed for the respondents' higher performance in isolation is connected to their inability to use context clues in determining the correct articulation while reading. As a result of the few number of English front vowels used in some of the words in the sentences, the respondents found it difficult to guess or determine which of the test items was the focus of the research. We also discovered that they had almost finished reading the sentences before realising that the front vowels were the focus of the research. Unlike in the test items in isolation, the respondents were quick to recognise the focus of the research and they became conscious in their productions of the vowels. The two figures below will clearly show the difference:

Fig. 6: Bar chart showing overall respondents' performance in sentence-contexts and words-in-isolation

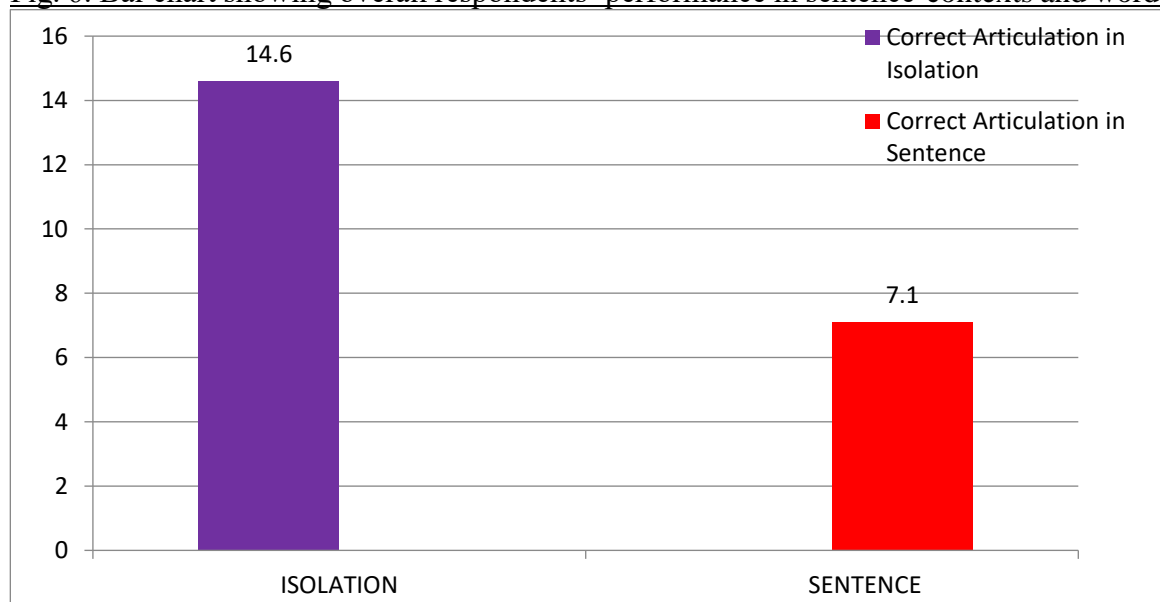
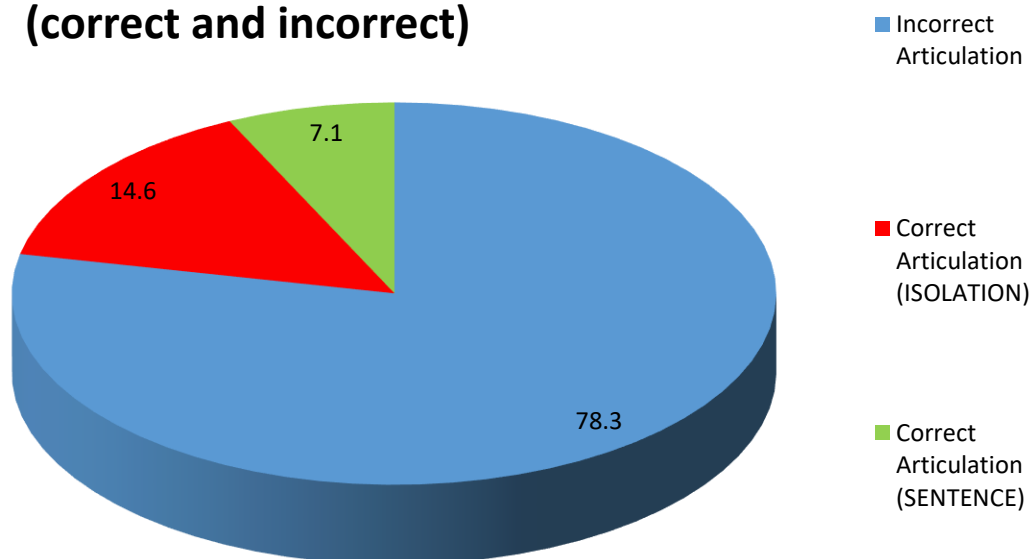


Fig.7: Pie chart showing overall percentages (correct & incorrect articulations / words-in-isolation & sentence-contexts)

Respondents' Articulations (correct and incorrect)



The test items posing more difficulties to the respondents

This section is concerned with the test items that posed more difficulties to the respondents. However, based on the analysis earlier presented, it is obvious that all the four front vowels posed difficulties to the respondents with poor performance of front close spread /i:/ having 14.6%, front half-close spread /ɪ/ having 18.7%, front half-open spread /e/ with 32.1% and front open spread having 21.2% respectively.

Conclusively, respondents found the four front vowels really difficult to articulate correctly thereby they pronounced ‘veto’, ‘penalise’, ‘liberate’, ‘women’, ‘jeopardise’, ‘meadow’ ‘plait’, and ‘timbre’ as [veto], [pɛnalais], [laibireit], [wumɛn], [dʒiopadaiz], [mi:do:], [pleit], and [timba] instead of /'vi:təʊ/, /'pi:nəlaɪz/, /'libəreɪt/, /'wɪmɪn/, /'dʒepədaɪz/, /'medəʊ/, /'plæt/, and /'tæmbə/. They found it difficult to articulate these sounds both in sentence-contexts and also in words-in-isolation. This could be as a result of lack of special training from a well-trained phonetician/phonologist or lack of interest in learning English sounds system.

Semantic implications of the test items

The semantic implications of this research can be viewed in two perspectives. Firstly, it does not really affect communication. On the other hand, it can also cause communication breakdown.

Considering the former, mispronunciation of some of these test items may not really affect the overall meaning of the sentence in a context. In other words, once there is a mutual intelligibility among interlocutors (speaker and hearer), even if some of the words were not correctly pronounced but with the aid of contextual domain where the statement is said, the hearer can easily decode what he/she wanted to say or pronounce. For instance, if Mr Y reported to Mrs Z that, “The colonel warned his army against any form of scourge”. Unconsciously, Mr Y mispronounced ‘colonel’ and ‘scourge’ as [kənɛl], and [skɔ:dʒ] instead of /'kɜ:nəl/ and /skɜ:dʒ/. As a result of the contextual make-up of the statement, Mrs Z can quickly decode and predict what he/she was supposed to pronounce. Mrs Z will quickly

comprehend that Mr Y wanted to say /'kɜ:nəl/ and /skɜ:dʒ/, not [kənəl], and [skɔ:dʒ]. In this scenario, the message will still be successfully passed across although there was mispronunciation.

Likewise, mispronunciation of word(s) in a sentence can cause a communication or semantic-breakdown as well when meaning is affected. For instance, if a teacher asked his student thus: "Please explain what timbre means". If the word 'timbre' is not correctly pronounced, the intended meaning of the speaker might not be unfolded. Instead of the speaker or teacher saying: [tæmbə] but ended up saying/pronouncing: [tɪmbə]. This shows that the right question has not been asked which means communication has not taken place. Here, *timbre* [tæmbə] and *timber* [tɪmbə] mean different things: 'timbre' /tæmbə/ means 'the quality of the sound made by a particular voice or musical instrument' while 'timber' [tɪmbə] denotes 'wood, plank or log'. Conclusively, the semantic implications of these mispronunciations include complete and partial communication break-downs as illustrated above. Therefore, there is a need to solve this problem.

Summary

The purpose of this research is to carry out the phonological analysis of English front vowels in the spoken English of selected undergraduates of Federal University Wukari. The researcher used a random sampling of one hundred and twenty (120) respondents (60 male and 60 female). They were randomly selected and were meant to read aloud the test items comprising English four front vowels in sentence-contexts and in words-in-isolation and the reading was recorded using a sound recorder device. Simple percentage was used to analyse the data.

From the results, it was discovered that many undergraduates of Federal University Wukari had difficulties in the articulation of the English front vowels which include /i:/, /ɪ/, /e/, and /æ/ in test items. As a result of their difficulties in the articulation of the front vowels, they pronounced 'veto', 'liberation', 'timbre', and 'jeopardise' as [veto], [laɪbɪreɪʃən], [tɪmbə], and [dʒɛpədaɪz] instead of /'vi:təʊ/, /lɪbər'eɪʃən/, /tæmbə/, and /'dʒɛpədaɪz/ respectively, thereby pronouncing /i:/ as [ɛ]; /ɪ/ as [ai], [u], [ɛ]; /e/ as [io], [ɛ], [i:]; and /æ/ as [ei], [i] respectively.

It was discovered that female students performed better than their male counterparts with total score of 220 (33.3%) out of 960 against their male counterparts that recorded 196 (20.4%).

It was revealed that out of the total obtainable scores of 160, the respondents from English Department scored 92 (57.5%) which is above average against their counterparts in other departments especially respondents from the Department of Medical Laboratory Science with a poor score of 10 (6.3%).

The result also revealed that those with high level of interest (interested) recorded 43.8% which is above forty percentage pass mark, having an upper hand over their counterparts with little level of interest (fairly interested) which recorded 23.9% poor performance and those without interest (not interested) with very poor performance 18.8%.

It was discovered in the overall performance of the respondents' articulation of all the test items that, out of overall total 1,920 obtainable scores, the respondents scored only 416 representing 21.7% as the correct articulation in the test items. This revealed that respondents had problems in the articulation of English words having front vowels.

It was revealed that all the four front vowels (/i:/, /ɪ/, /e/, /æ/) tested posed difficulties to the respondents while pronouncing them. This is evident in the close poor performance of front close spread /i:/ as 14.6%, front half-close spread /ɪ/ having 18.7%, front half-open spread /e/ with 32.1% and front open spread having 21.2% respectively.

The study equally showed the performance of the respondents in the articulation of the test items based on words-in-isolation and sentence contexts. It was discovered that out of the total obtainable scores of the correct articulation of 1,920, respondents performed better in words-in-isolation than in sentence-contexts; the respondents' performance in isolation stood at 281 (14.6%) while sentence-contexts was 135 (7.1%) as the correct articulation. Conclusively, it was found out that the semantic implications of these mispronunciations included complete and partial communication break-downs.

CONCLUSION

The study covered the impending phonological problem of the articulation of the front vowels by randomly selected respondents, taking cognisance of their performance based on their sex, departments, and levels of interest in learning oral English accordingly. Based on the findings, it was discovered that the respondents' performance in the articulation of the front vowels both in context and word-in-isolation was not up to the expected average or above-average percentage, but their score was very poor as the overall score stood at 416 (21.7%). This is to show that respondents had problems in the articulation of English front vowels. However, further research could be focused on the analysis of the central and back vowels in the spoken English of selected Nigerian speakers of English.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In line with the research findings made in this exercise, the researcher wishes to recommend the following. In the first place, students should not confine themselves to only checking the meaning of words and the use of words in the dictionaries but also check the accurate transcription and pronunciation of such words. Furthermore, they can as well install Phonetizer applications in their handy gadgets or mobile phones. In addition, there should be a periodic conference, workshops and seminars to improve the undergraduates' pronunciation patterns so as to alleviate them from the interference of their MTs. More so, a special training in phonetics and phonology should be given to the undergraduates especially those from ELS Department, since they will be the ones to teach other students. Moreover, the government should provide good, modern and standard language laboratories, libraries and other facilities so as to encourage the students and also increase their levels of interest in learning English sound systems.

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Child Soldiers' Vulnerability in David Hartness' *Amani's River*

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Abstract

The widespread issue of child soldiers in Africa has been a long-standing social problem that often receives inadequate attention. During conflicts, the rights of children and young people are massively violated, making them severe victims of armed strife. Their entitlements to live with dignity, receive support, and be protected from violence, abuse and neglect, as well as their ability to develop to their fullest potential, are usually hindered. Wars have led to the deaths of numerous innocent children, displaced countless families, and adversely affected many children who are active combatants. This study, therefore, explores the vulnerability of child soldiers in David Hartness' *Amani's River*. Utilizing Caruth's Trauma theory, the paper delves into the traumatic experiences of child victims, the impact of such experiences on them, and the coping strategies they adopt. The study discovered variations in the traumatic experiences faced by Aderito and Victoria highlighting the challenges each endures. It was also discovered that severe traumatic events faced by child soldiers can trigger emotional and psychological responses such as hyper-vigilance, jumpiness, intrusive imagery related to the trauma, repeated flashbacks, racing heart and trembling. The study showed that victims of armed conflict, when portrayed as narrators in literary works, can effectively recount the horrors and suffering associated with child soldiering. It is recommended that literary authors use victims to tell their own stories.

Keywords: Africa, Armed conflict, Child soldiers, Trauma, Narration, Experience

Introduction

Children are the bedrock of every society and it is commonly believed that a family is not whole without them, as they are irreplaceable. To this end, in a typical African society, the number of children a marriage produces is often seen as a key indicator of its success. “Family is the central of the society and whatever the family is, that is who its society is” (Njoku, 2004). According to Convention on the Rights of a Child, the family is the central unit of the society and the usual environment for the growth and well-being of its members, particularly children (2005). Childhood can be seen as the most delicate stage of human development, filled with vulnerability. Children rely heavily on others to meet their fundamental needs, which make them especially vulnerable. This dependency is also evident in other life stages. For instance, many elderly individuals are unable to care for themselves at the later stage of their lives,

Kurfi, H.M & Aliyu M.A (2014) opine that matters related to children have been given the most thoughts in all societies and cultures in human history and as such children have become synonymous to family which is the foundation of societies and nations and the emblem of the strength of families, especially in developing societies and countries (1). They also add that in developing countries and societies on the African continent, the births of children are usually heralded with extravagant preparations, cultural and religious rituals and ceremonies often accompanied with gifts presented to such families. They go further that for social science and literature, the word ‘children’ with reference to the global south, resonates with such phenomena as abandoned and neglected children, child abuse, child soldiering, child-trafficking and child labour and that the issue of child labour, continues to be a disturbing phenomenon (2).

Child soldiering refers to the exploitation of children as fighters or helpers in war, carried out by either government or rebel groups. Children can be abducted and coerced into battle in rebel or government armies, and there are instances where entire groups of children have been taken from their schools for this purpose. In some situations, children are convinced to join military groups by their friends or family members who are already participating. In these cases, they may be motivated by religious beliefs, and/or by the hope that their minority ethnic group or impoverished region will one day enjoy political independence and material benefits. Most often, however, the children have been coerced into what is a form of forced labour. The actual work they do can include wielding sophisticated weaponry at a very young age and with little training. They may be forced to commit acts of extreme savagery, often under the influence of drugs to dull their sensitivity and moral conscience—and under pain of their death if they refuse to carry out the order.

According to ILO, tens of thousands of girls and boys find themselves fighting adult wars in at least 17 countries in different regions around the world. Some are used as fighters and take a direct part in hostilities while others are used in supportive roles (e.g. cooks, porters, messengers, or spies) or for sexual purposes. They are abducted, forcefully recruited or personally decide to enroll (for instance for survival, for protection or vengeance).

However, when personal initiatives are analyzed, it becomes clear that they were taken under duress and in ignorance of the consequences. Alfredson posits that children under the age of 18 who serve in armed forces and the armed group around the world are vulnerable to serious physical and psychological violence. She explains further that child soldiers serve within militaries and armed groups in which complete cooperation and obedience are demanded, in contexts where moral and legal safeguards against their abuse may have broken down (2011). The use of children in armed conflict is the worst form of child labour, a violation of human rights and a war crime. ILO Convention No.182 defines forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict as the worst form of child labour (vol. 4).

Methodology

This study employed literary analysis to examine the portrayal of child labour in *Amani's River*. The study adopted a qualitative approach, involving a detailed and close examination of the chosen novel for the study to bring out the factors responsible for child labour, forms, effects and coping strategies exhibited by child labour victims in the novel. Trauma theory elements such as memory, repression, trauma symptoms and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) were utilized to examine the traumatic ordeals faced by child soldiers, the frequency of violence against them, and their efforts to cope with and overcome these adverse experiences.

Theoretical Framework

For the analytical task to achieve its intended purpose, it is essential to have a suitable theoretical framework for analyzing the chosen novel. Therefore, trauma theory is the theory used to create an appropriate model for this analysis. Trauma theory was utilized to assess and explore the traumatic experiences of child soldiers with a focus on repression, memory and post-traumatic stress disorder as key elements in the study's analysis. It also enables comprehension of the behaviours and actions exhibited by the identified child soldiers under scrutiny.

Trauma theory emerged in the 1960s from several areas of social concern: recognition of the prevalence of violence against women and children (rape, battering and incest); identification of the phenomenon of PTSD in (Vietnam) war veterans; and awareness of the psychic scars inflicted by torture and genocide, especially regarding the Holocaust. Trauma theory attempts to understand the different ways by which traumatic occurrences are demonstrated, processed, exposed and repressed throughout a variety of literary and historical novels. Trauma has been perceived and defined in different ways over the years, dependent on the development of knowledge and the understanding of the impact of traumatic experiences on the individual, family, community and society (Van der Kolk, 2014). In recent decades, the definition of trauma has been consistently inclusive of the following elements: (1) an identified event or series of events that is (2) experienced by the individuals as physically or emotionally harmful, threatening or overwhelming and (3) has lasting and holistic effects on the individual's functioning (Herman, 1992;

Laplanche and Pontalis, 1973; Ringel and Brandell, 2012; Substance Abuse and Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) 2012; Van der Kolk, 2014).

Child Soldiers' Vulnerability in David Hartness' *Amani's River*

Aderito's narration reveals the connection between warfare and the vulnerability of child soldiers in *Amani's River*, akin to the depiction in Uzodinma Iweala's novel, *Beast of No Nation*. In *Amani's River*, the narrative unveils the harmful impact of war on children, who constitute the most susceptible group. Through Aderito and Victoria's characters, the author illustrates the ordeals of child soldiers and how these experiences shape their lives, especially highlighting Victoria's daily abuse. The text delves into the harsh conditions faced by child soldiers, the repercussions of such circumstances, and the coping mechanisms they employ. These are revealed in the following:

Forms of Child Labour in *Amani's River*

Children Used for Armed Forces (Aderito and Victoria)

The prevalent use of children in armed combat is a contemporary manifestation of slavery and a form of human trafficking that is as serious and as lucrative as the international crimes of trafficking in weapons and drugs (Tiefenbrun, 2000). Children involved in armed forces serve as fighters or auxiliary personnel in conflict situations conducted by either government or rebel groups. Often, these young individuals recruited as child soldiers are forcefully taken from their residences, subjected to torture and trained in violent ideologies, coerced into substance abuse and threatened with death. This was evident in the experiences of Aderito and Victoria, who were seized from their homes in Homoine by rebel groups to be enlisted as child soldiers. Aderito narrates their dreadful experiences, including failed attempts to evade abduction, stating:

As we lay, trembling in the tall dead grass, a footstep crept closer. I didn't want to look. Lying with my head lowered, I hoped the impression was off in the distance and prayed that whoever this person was, he came in peace. Someone was staring at me, so I closed my eyes, hoping that the elongated stare went away. Without notice, a sharp kick dug in my side. The sharp pain intensified as a large boot hit my rib with extreme force. I curled my body and gasped for air. I panted, and just when the pain dispersed, a second blow to the same spot landed even harder on my rib cage... (71)

Children enlisted as child soldiers are typically under the control of adult soldiers who utilize various tactics to manipulate them into compliance. These young recruits are exposed daily to dehumanizing acts of cruelty that toughen them and instill fearlessness. In order to stay alive, these recruits must adapt to becoming true soldiers by engaging in

violence, causing harm, and partaking in immoral behaviours. Aderito, in order to survive and gain favour with the commander whom he regards as a parental figure after being separated from his family for an extended period, learns how to handle firearms. Initially, this seemed awkward and surreal, but with practice, he becomes desensitized to his actions and no longer feels remorse for his actions. A clear illustration of this change in Aderito's mindset can be seen in his statement:

It was my third attempt, my eyes became darker, and a demon consumed my body. I ran up to the dummy and hit it hard with the butt of the gun and then let out a massive scream as I turned my gun around and stabbed the dummy hard in the gut. This was done with such a force that the wooden support beam broke near the bottom, and the dummy toppled to the ground, bouncing first before resting...I let out one mighty scream as if I were a monstrous maniac ready to kill. The surrounding instructors clapped as if I had just performed a miracle...(79)

From the passage, it can be deduced that child soldiers like Aderito are usually brainwashed thoroughly and brutally to the point that their ethics and moral values become so distorted that they believe doing evil is good. Aderito is deceived into thinking the commander is after his wellbeing because the commander usually commends him whenever he kills or exhibits any form of violence. "What you did today was impressive. I think you will be an outstanding fighter and will make me proud" (79). As a result of the commander's immense satisfaction with Aderito's skills, he provides him with drugs that alter his state of mind, causing him to forget the hardships he has endured and the atrocities he has committed. Aderito recounts the incident:

You know, I have something for you." He reached over, grabbed the base of my chair, and pulled it toward him. The commander reached for my hand, took out a large tan rubber tube, and tied it just above my elbow. "This will help you forget about what happened yesterday..." He pressed the syringe, which released the substance into my bloodstream. Within a few seconds, I became relaxed, my body slouched further into the chair, and my head rested on the back...The sensation filled my desire, my worries escaped my thoughts, and my mind and body felt free from any terrible thing that might have happened. (80)

Child soldiers are frequently administered drugs like cocaine and marijuana to lessen their fears and boost their combat skills. However, drug use can hinder a child's holistic development in a healthy and normal way, as well as their ability to experience freedom

and dignity. These children initially trained to be fearless, ultimately transform into terrifying killing machines that others strive to steer clear of:

I was standing in shock as I had done it, killed a man, and now I was part of this movement. My emotions torn between the morals of childhood lessons and the evil that appeared. The devil inside said that this was the right thing to do while the nobility was telling me to run. The demon was taking over, and the voice inside my head teaching me right from wrong was getting quieter. (83)

Child soldiers endure brutal brainwashing and harsh combat training that compel them to follow orders to kill innocent individuals in order to survive. They are coerced into committing acts of extreme violence and barbarism, such as beheadings, amputations, rape, and burning people alive. In some instances, they are even forced to consume human flesh, a practice their commander claim will protect them from their enemies and is integral to their training:

...Today, we will cut up this body and feed you for dinner. This will protect you from FRELIMO troops, the commander said to the crowd of young children. No one even questioned him. We agreed that this must be the best action, not because it was logical but because the commander had said it, he must know what he was doing... Victoria came back a few minutes later, bringing a bowl of stew, with a distinctive human flesh that was to be given to the child soldiers. (85-86)

Similarly, Aderito and other child soldiers are forced to witness and commit acts of violence that no one, especially children, should ever encounter. Aderito's traumatic experiences in the rebel camp persists as he feels compelled to prove himself as a courageous man and honourable warrior to everyone around him, particularly the commander and his fellow soldiers. He engages in further atrocities, which numb his emotions and harden his heart. The overwhelming feelings have engulfed him to the point where he fears the person he has become:

I felt like a man holding a gun, dressed in military attire, but appearing as an innocent boy ready to step outside into the real world and enter the life of a criminal. My clothes were too big, and my gun was difficult to hold. My face wore the ideals of a child, but I didn't dare think the thoughts as the man inside did not wish to hear the innocent thoughts of a boy. (90-91) Child soldiers are often compelled to witness the deaths of their close relatives. Such experiences are highly traumatizing, especially for a young

child. A notable example is Aderito, who observed the brutal killing of his father by the commander of the camp where he was trained as a child soldier. Aderito recounts the disturbing event:

That is the commander. They are probably coming back to find me,” I said as I started to shake and pace back and forth, frantic at their presence. My eyes widened, and I couldn’t find the strength to blink. I paced up and down the corridor, trying to escape from the threat, but realized that there was nowhere to go... “You guys should stay here. I will go talk with them,” my father said as he walked toward the door... I watched my father walk bravely toward the commander with his hands stretched out, signaling his wish for peaceful talks. (191-192)

Children who witness the death of loved ones are prone to experiencing trauma. Witnessing his father’s death is a traumatizing experience for Aderito. This is seen in his recollection of the event. He recalls the violent incident which causes his father’s death:

The commander turned his back toward my father and then turned around with his fists clenched tight together. With extreme force, his fist landed on my father’s stomach. His body lunged forward. His mouth widened, and he gasped for breath. The commander grabbed my father’s chin and raised his head, then landed a hard left hook to his face. My father flew backward, and blood flew from his mouth. He landed on his knees with his face in the dirt and his buttocks sticking in the air. (192)

Aderito’s vivid description of his father’s excruciating pain and death as he struggles with the commander and other soldiers is made bare in his words:

The commander lifted his right foot and placed it on his mouth. He dug deep, pressing hard until he had pried open his mouth. He continued to dig into his mouth, stuffing his boot further down the throat. The commander bit his lip hard as he tried to put strength into his act of brutality... The commander left briefly and went to the truck. He grabbed a gas canister and walked over my father. He raised the canister over my father’s head and began to pour... The entire canister emptied on my father, and now he sat covered with gas, wincing in pain and shaking at the thought of what might happen next...(195-196)

This particular incident shatters Aderito's spirit, leaving him to grapple with the trauma for an extended period. His response aligns with what Caruth described as "the reaction to an unforeseen or overwhelming violent event or events that are not entirely understood at the time they happen..." Aderito conveys his struggle to fully grasp the enormity of what he has witnessed by stating that:

I ran away and into my room. I jumped on my bed, face first, and then covered my eyes with my hand. My chest rapidly rose and fell, and my heart pounded...Tears covered my bare hand. I tried to yell, but when I opened my mouth, gasps of air came out...I tried to talk to God, but I felt that he had left me a long time ago. I breathed sporadically in and out; my stomach was shaking, and one tear after the other came from my eyes...My eyes turned red, and breathing increased to the point that I was hyperventilating...Perhaps it was God who stopped them, or the commander knew that the brutal torture of my father left me weakened...(197-198)

From the foregoing, it can be deduced that Aderito endures significant emotional and psychological trauma. Aderito's father, Amani, sacrifices his life to secure his son's freedom. Following his father's death, Aderito continues to suffer from the traumatic experiences he experienced as a child soldier.

Domestic Child Servant (Victoria)

Victoria, a ten-year-old girl abducted alongside Aderito, is forced into servitude in the rebel's camp. Girls taken for this purpose are severely mistreated and enslaved, particularly since they are not allowed to leave or return to their families. Abducted girls have limited chances of becoming child soldiers like the boys; instead, they are primarily used as domestic servants or sex slaves. Victoria is assigned her as the domestic servant as soon as she arrives to the camp. The commander informs the other soldiers of her assigned roles as he says:

The commander looked at Victoria and said, the girl will be a servant. She will not be fighting with the boys. Take her away and make her do womanly work. (77)

Based on the excerpt, one observes that girls unlike boys are used as cooks and sex slaves by soldiers, and may be forced to engage in combat and indirect hostilities as well. These children are usually exposed to injuries and death, even if they survive, they will forever bear the traces of the physical and psychological violence they suffered during their captivity. At the camp, Victoria though a domestic servant also faces sexual exploitations and physical assaults from soldiers.

The narrator goes on to depict how Victoria faces sexual and physical abuses. He narrates: I looked up as Victoria was being dragged by Zeilo. She was kicking, screaming, and yelling for me to help. They entered a room that was vacant and shut the door...I walked toward the casement. Zelio had pinned her to the bed. Victoria shook, trying to avoid his kisses. He punched her hard several times in the face. This stunned and calmed her. Zelio kissed her neck hard and then worked his way to her navel... He took her shirt as she struggled more. He slapped her across the face... (146-147)

As it can be inferred from the extract, Victoria is abused physically and sexually by Zeilo, one of the soldiers in the camp who thinks that girls are bitches and should be used as such. He says "Tough. You didn't use her like a man. Consider that a lesson. That is how you use your bitches." (147). Girls used as domestic servants in the soldiers' camp are usually at the receiving end of abuse.

Effects of Child Labour on Child Labour Victims in *Amani's River*

The experience of being a child soldier profoundly affects the behaviour and emotions of the victims. The novel emphasizes its devastating consequences, such as enforced premature adulthood, psychological trauma, and even death.

Premature Adulthood

Aderito, Victoria and other child soldiers, because of their early exposure to violence, are compelled to adopt adult behaviours and witness experiences meant only for adults. To gain the favour of the commander and other soldiers, Aderito learns to kill, with the commander asserting that, "Aderito has proven that he is a man and is ready to show us his loyalty." (82). The innocence Aderito brought to the camp is stripped away as he is trained to become a beast. The adults forced him to commit terrible acts, things that no child should ever have to do or experience. Aderito acknowledges this:

An older man saw that I was a child and tried to stop me. He yelled several times, but I was unaware of his attempt. The old man tried to scold me as if I were his son, but what he didn't know was that my new father praised me for my actions...I approached the man, and when I was a few inches from the stick, I flipped the gun and knocked his hand hard, forcing him to release the cane back to the ground..."Why does an innocent boy look and act so evil?" he said as a single tear rolled from his lower eyelid, shaken by the sight of me. "I look at your face, and I see such sweetness, but there is something about you that shows destruction. Why, my son? What did they do to you?." (99)

Aderito adapts to the harsh lifestyle of the brutal soldiers as a result of the negative experiences he encounters at the camp. Aderito who used to uphold his values and good upbringing now displays no conscience or remorse for killing, a change noted by Victoria as she tries to reason

with him. This shift in mindset is evident in the conversation that ensues between Victoria and Aderito:

The adults have made you do terrible things, but somewhere, that sweet boy whom I first met is still there... Someday you will remember how to feel, how to cry and understand morals again.”...I began to cry, which turned into a flowing stream of tears. This was the first time I remembered crying. I pictured the men and children whom I learned to beat and kill...I am not sure that I should be called a boy again; my childhood had long since passed, and I was a man who killed and, for a strange sick reason, enjoyed the brutality of my actions. (108)

Psycholoic Trauma

In her insightful book, *Trauma and Recovery: From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror*, Herman argues that psychological trauma involves witnessing horrific events (7). She further contends that it is morally impossible to remain neutral, compelling bystanders to choose sides. Similarly, Knapp posits that when we view the world through the suffering of children, we cannot help feel guilt about the world we have created (13). Aderito experiences depression and trauma as a child soldier in the rebel camp. He longs for the life he had before arriving at the camp, and the thoughts of leaving his parents and home behind deepen his depression. This episode leads to a series of emotional and psychological traumas, which Caruth describes as “repeated flashbacks, nightmares and repetitive phenomena” (1996). Aderito recounts that:

Many nights since being crowned a man and hailed by my peers as a strong and noble warrior I spent alone in the darkness, weeping under the thin blanket, feeling nothing but an inner child escaping the darkness of the man. I longed for the days spent by the river and wished they could come back to me and allow the youthful behavior to flood and show through the darkened and closing walls...The walls depressed me, but there wasn’t a single person that could help through the depressed state.”(90)

Victoria also endures harrowing experiences at the camp, significantly impacting her psyche and self-image. She suffers assaults and rape from soldiers old enough to be her father. Additionally, becoming a mother at a tender age, without the means to cater for her child further contributes to her traumatic experience. The difficulties of childbirth were especially arduous for Victoria, given her age, as evidenced by the complications she faced during delivery. Aderito narrates that:

I went to Victoria and dropped to my knees at her side, grabbing a towel on the floor and wiping her forehead clean. I grabbed her hand and kneeled on the ground, wiping more

sweat from her head. Sweat drenched her clothes and softened her hair...She pushed hard and gripped my hand. It felt as if she were trying to break me as she squeezed harder with every push and contraction. My face winced in pain, and my body tightened as I tried to resist the bone-crushing trauma. She got tired, let go, and rested, panting stiffly. (151)

Another instance of Victoria's experience of trauma is depicted when she was raped again after the birth of her baby. She recounts her ordeal to Aderito when she says:

I was raped again. They threw my baby aside. She began to weep and cry into her hands. They raped me in front of my baby, she said with her mouth opened wide as the words screeched out, echoing through the small room. The sounds of the words were deep and hurting to her. Her chin shook, and her head and neck lowered, shrinking into her shoulders, which moved, as she couldn't stop crying... (160)

Aderito who is also deeply traumatized provides various illustrations of flashbacks from his life before he gained freedom. During his stay in Homoine, Aderito's behaviours align with the symptoms of PTSD, manifesting as hallucinations, nightmares and flashbacks. He describes his experiences:

When I slept, images flashed through my head that brought the past, crashing me back into reality. Images of Victoria being shot, the old man begging for his life before being killed, and men, women, children dying because of my actions...186)

These words highlight the profound impact of his trauma, illustrating how deeply embedded his experiences are within his psyche. Aderito's bottled emotions unfold through tears, driven by his feelings of guilt and regret. This phase of his life, described by Caruth as traumatic memory- an event too immediate for the conscious to record, but which resurfaces later as belated and repetitive images (Felman 8) - highlights the vivid, terrifying and haunting nature of Aderito's experiences. These traumatic memories manifest as nightmares, flashbacks and overwhelming, all of which severely undermine his emotional stability and prolong his recovery. Aderito's psychological trauma is compounded by the horrific event of witnessing his father being brutally killed by the camp commander. His father in a desperate attempt to save Aderito confronts the commander and paid the ultimate price. Aderito witnessed his father being burned to death, an image that left an indelible mark on his psyche. This is poignantly illustrated in Aderito's detailed narration of the traumatic experience:

I rushed back to the casement. The commander was standing just to the right. My father was on his knees, shaking. He

dialed in, looked through the window , and saw a few eyes looking back...As he did this, the commander lit the match and dropped it toward my father's head...The flames grew longer, and the match appeared to land on my dad's head. Flames spread from his head all the way to his ankles...He kept screaming as the flames cut through his flesh and headed down toward his bones. He fell to the ground and rolled several times, took one last scream-and then silence. The body lay on the ground, continuing to burn the flesh, bones, and clothes... (197).

These words convey the depth of Aderito's trauma, evidencing how witnessing such brutality has profoundly affected his emotional and psychological wellbeing.

Findings

The study discovered distinct variations in the traumatic experiences faced by Aderito and Victoria, highlighting the unique challenges each endures. Despite these differences, a common thread emerges: the experiences of child soldiers, irrespective of gender, are overwhelmingly traumatic. The study identifies several core elements of this trauma which include rape, intoxication, psychological trauma, battering, hunger and death. For Victoria, her traumatic experiences are compounded by the assaults and rape perpetrated by soldiers who are much older than her, as well as the significant emotional and physical strain of becoming a mother at an exceptionally young age. Aderito, on the other hand, endures severe psychological trauma marked by symptoms of PTSD such as hallucinations, nightmares and flashbacks. His trauma is rooted in harrowing events like witnessing the brutal killing of his father, a scene that replays in his mind, instilling immense guilt and sorrow.

Conclusion

The study concludes that through literary portrayals of child labourers like Aderito and Victoria, the novel effectively highlights the difficulties faced by young victims and educates readers of all ages on preventing and addressing child labour. By focusing on children aged 6-14, the study explores how the wellbeing of these individuals can shape future societies. Ultimately, the novel seeks to increase awareness and discourage the perpetuation of child labour.

Recommendations

Literary artists and playwrights are advised to centre their works on the narratives of child labour victims, allowing these individuals to share their own experiences. Further research should explore the impact of child labour experiences, particularly from the perspective of the victims themselves. Additionally, it is recommended that literary artists present a wider range of coping and survival mechanisms that can be utilized by children who find themselves in situations of child labour.

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The Impact of Women in Northern Nigeria Novels: Reflections From Zaynab Alkali's *Cobwebs And other Stories* and Abubakar Gimba's *Sacred Apples*

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Abstract

*For no fault of the women, society and men have come up with beliefs that have overtime been used to undermine the roles and status of women in society. In most cases, the women are described as the “weak’ and vulnerable”. This belief promotes the idea of patriarchy in society. Early literary writings in Northern Nigeria project patriarchy through the disdainful indifference and cruelty that the men characters subject the women characters to (if they ever appear). However, with the introduction of feminism as a literary ideology, conceptions on the roles and status of women began to change. The emergent trend as it affects the representation of women in subsequent Northern Nigeria novels is therefore, examined through Zaynab Alkali's *Cobwebs and Other Stories* (1997). and Abubakar Gimba's *Sacred Apples* (1994) This study focuses on the novelists' use of feminism as an ideology to underscore the need for women liberation from the shackles of societal inhibitions and patriarchal domination that have continued to dwarf the potentials, abilities and capabilities of women in Northern Nigeria overtime. Indeed, that they have been described as mothers, housekeepers and house wives whose voices really do not matter in the scheme of things in society is what the contemporary literary works under this study have come to challenge.*

Keywords: Impact, Reflection, Patriarchal domination, Feminism, Northern Nigeria.

Introduction

Literature as a concept has been defined by a number of scholars. Without recourse to any specific definition, we would want to posit that literature is a reflection of the happenings in society. For it is by so doing that we shall be able to examine and appraise the socio cultural practices of the people of Northern Nigeria and how such translate into treatment of characters as projected in the novels of our focus. Literature is a canon which consists of those works in language by which a community defines itself through the course of its history.

According to Michael Jerone (1988); literature is:

a human product, a humane art. It cannot be carried on (created), understood (studied), or appreciated (experienced) outside of its definitive human context. The general science governing that human context is socio-historical (2).

Likewise Pinel Vinn Shava is of the opinion that:

Literature is a piece of writing that is valued as a work of art. It records and reflects societal experiences- its values, problems structure and event. Literature embodies the writer's evaluation of his world or illuminate its possibilities.

Lindfors (1982) in an attempt to contextually situate issues within known milieu posits that:

When examining anything that has changed overtime, usually it is a good policy to begin at the beginning. The past can teach us much about the present, so we ought to try to place our subject in historical perspective by asking a number of questions about its evolution. How did it come into being? Why did it assume this shape rather than another? What forces influenced its growth and development ... (p. 1).

That our subject of study is a phenomenon of change presupposes that we ask questions similar to those enumerated above if we must come to terms with the concern for an appraisal of the impact of women in Northern Nigeria, particularly, as exposed by the novels under study'.

Northern Nigeria is a culturally diverse region with certain collective identity. It today houses a number of states carved out of the former Northern Region of Nigeria. Records over time have shown that literary writings in Northern Nigeria from the pre-colonial era were pastime of the men. Women writers have indeed lagged behind their male counterparts. Sani and Ibrahirn (1997) in justifying this claim recall that:

For instance, in 1985, stock and price list issued by the most influential publisher of literature in Northern Nigeria, the Northern Nigerian Publishing Company (NNPC) Zaria, out of a total 68 literary titles; only

one poetry book was authored by a woman, i.e., Alkalami a I-lannun Mata (The Pen Welded by Women); an educational piece in the Hausa language by H. Hauwa and H. Yai Shehu. (pp. 1-2).

The medium of writing in Northern Nigeria appears from the beginning to have been Hausa and other native languages. However, as is the tradition with other regional literatures. The upsurge for creative writing witnessed the upcoming of popular fiction in English particularly after Nigerian's political independence.

Our investigation into the status and roles of women in Northern Nigeria as captured in the novels with Northern Nigeria setting is therefore a search into what things are in operation as the concern the women in Northern Nigeria society. Then and today, Northern Nigeria Literature in English like other popular regional works of art is said to have been dominated by male writers. Certainly, these writers concern themselves with the tradition of presenting the women as characters within the milieu of a male oriented and dominated world. They explore the existing basic societal inferences and religions obligations to promote patriarchy. This condition in Northern Nigeria and by extension the view of the wider world unfortunately, presents women as objects to be oppressed and exploited by the men.

It must be emphasized at this point that the shades of exploitation of the women overtime are not necessarily as a result of any inherent weaknesses that the women are naturally endowed with but those that society and men have set for them to perpetually keep them in a state of subservience and servitude. That we today have literary works produced to challenge these traits is a drive towards cutting a new identity for the women an identity entirely different from what it used to be in the past.

Women in the Eyes of Men and Society

The men overtime have generally exhibited some characteristics that place them high and above the women. This belief structured within the ambit and purview of patriarchy has over the years been responsible for the domination of the women by men. Walum (1977) reflecting on the concept of patriarchy presents two major perspectives and submits that:

The bio-genetic explanation is based on the idea that, because male dominance is culturally universal, it must be genetically caused and it must play a major role in the survival of the human species. Males and Females, the proponents argue, are physically and hormonally different. Males have a higher level of androgens, the "aggressively" hormone, whereas females have a monthly hormonal cycle. (p. 141).

The implication of this submission is that, generally, anatomical and hormonal differences between the males and the females presuppose that the men are more set apart for energetic tasks hue the women for certain biological factors that allow them to perform biological roles of child bearing and lactation are for domestic works.

Furthermore, Walum (1977) explores on the perspective of bio-cultural theory in the advancement of male chauvinism (patriarchy) when he says:

In hunting and gathering societies, meat (protein) is scarce, and men have monopoly on hunting and fishing. However, contrary to common opinion, men are hunters not because they are physically stronger or more agile... it is primarily because hunting and carrying burdens are incompatible activities. Women are not only carrying foetuses in uterus, upsetting balance in latter month, but they carry nursing infants. (p. 142).

There is a clear deduction from the above that men have an edge over the women. Male domination shown through the rights and privileges he has to control and distribute scarce goods and services as the provider while the woman only engages in child bearing and rearing.

Similarly, Obafemi (2008) in a discourse on gender politics is of the view that:

Women are defined relative to men, who typify humanity. All religions give credence to this man-derived personality of woman. Both the Bible and the Koran assert that Eve was created from the rib of Adam; so as to assist him...The African traditional religion gives roles to women, which are inexorably inferior to those of men - as wives, mothers and home-tenders. (p. 80).

The implication of this is that the man is stronger and therefore superior to the woman. The woman at best is to the man; a helpmate and this has been the situation over time.

Patriarchy and the Women Fold

Patriarchy is a phenomenon that is used to portray men as superior to the women. Joseph (2003) discussing along this belief submits that:

Patriarchy is an ideology that gives men confidence. Subordinates the female to male or treats the female as an inferior being. (p. 161).

This submission is in agreement with the belief and practice of the Northern Nigeria society. Indeed, teachings of the Islamic belief, Christianity and the traditional beliefs of the people Northern Nigeria clearly support patriarchy.

Islam on one hand is said to have classified women as properties to be acquired by men for sex and discarded just as the Judeo-Christian myth of creation clearly defines woman and her expectations. The NIV Study Bible in the Book of Genesis (Chapter 2:21-22) says that:

So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep, while he was sleeping; he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the Lord made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

This is an attestation to the belief that God created woman out of man and for man.

Accordingly, the Holy Bible in the Book of (I Peter 3:17) describes the woman as ‘weaker vessels who should be submissive to their husbands and call their husbands their masters’.

The positions of these religious beliefs allow the men in Northern Nigeria to treat the women with lesser dignity. They accord the women the status of “servants” to be used, oppressed and exploited at will. This explains why it is not strange to have female characters in their works of art take roles that are traditionally ascribed to them without complaints.

Feminism and Northern Nigeria Literature

Developments over time, however, began to raise some questions in the minds of writers generally. Such questions have to do with raising issues and voices over the decades of gender inequality. The attempt to question the rationale behind this gender inequality by the emergent female authors and some of their men counterparts with flair for gender issues as it were is not to create or draw a battle line between them and the earlier male authors. Instead, the attempt is geared towards spirited efforts by both sexes, to struggle against the negative, oppressive, exploitative and harmful trado-religious, socio-cultural and societal beliefs and practices that are known to have been obstacles to the full realization of the potentials of the women over time.

This development opens up the quest into the representation of female characters differently from what used to be the case. Thus, the emergent roles as are assigned the women characters gave rise to a new chapter in Northern Nigeria novels, particularly those of the two authors this study is concerned with. The development in their works clearly demonstrates their exploration into the ideology of feminism that is primarily concerned with the emancipation of the women folk.

Feminism as a literary theory is a worldwide ideology commonly employed in gender discourse. It is a term believed to have been coined by a French Philosopher, Charles Fourier in 1837. Nevertheless, its usage today is not limited to the Western World. It has been embraced worldwide though with modifications as may be occasioned by cultural and economic realities of the embracing nations and societies.

Joseph 2003 asserts that: feminism is a worldwide ideological and political movement directed at changing the existing power relations between men and women in a patriarchal society” (p. 161). Similarly, Balogun (2007) submits that:

Feminism is an attempt by the women folk to universally liberate itself from male chauvinism and patriarchy. While the shift is not intended to cause gender terrorism, it aims at making the position of women at home, at work, at school, in the street, etc. more challenging to themselves and their men-folk in the social phenomenon... .Because of its interest in social issues, feminism, like Marxism, is historical, political and it proposes a dynamic ideological commitment. (p. 204).

It is obvious that owing to a number of factors, feminism has been given colourations. We today have terms like “Western Feminism”, “African Feminism”, “Radical Feminism”, “Post-Feminism”, as

shades of the feminist' literary theory. Notwithstanding, one thing peculiar to feminism is its centrality on addressing the imbalances in gender issues as they affect the women folk.

To explore into this role, Joseph (2007) submits that "feminism started with women movements in the 1960s with exhibitions to depict the skills of women in various disciplines" (pp. 192-193). However, with time, this gradually featured the exhibition of concerted efforts to show that the women are human beings with rights, capabilities and capacities for exhibition of equal potentials like their men-folk.

The idea behind the foregoing is to create an opportunity to preach the need for women to be treated with decorum, respect and dignity. This uncommon moving voice is can\ assed in the novels and other literary works that we now have. Indeed, these contemporary works feature the representation of female characters playing roles uncommon to the women in earlier works. This resounding breakthrough by the authors owe a lot to the theory of feminism that allows for the introduction of a new trend in the literary works that began to hit reading shelves as from I 970s till date.

This development enlarges the movement for women liberation. Particularly as observed by Joseph (2007) thus:

...feminists no longer discuss minorities and disadvantaged groups. They now focus discourse on the concepts of marginality to debunk the identification of the margin (women) wit evil and the centre (men) with good. Just like the post-colonial authors wrote on metropolis or rewrote their masters' narratives, post-feminists or the margins also write collectively, speaking for or on behalf of a group rather than individuals in order to postulate a change in the patriarchal system such that will make both sexes to be appreciated for their worth. (p. 195).

As it is within the purview of our study, our interest is on an appraisal of concerns of the current Northern Nigeria novelists as distinct from earlier works of art that promote patriarchs. Recent works now react differently to the old tradition of women subjugation by the men. Hence, our choice of Abubakar Gimba's *Sacred Apples* (1994) and Zaynab Alkali's *Cobwebs and other stories* (1997) to justify the influence of feminism as a dynamic ideological commitment for the actualization and realization of the advancement: of egalitarianism, conservatism and radical responses in the women characters as opposed to the idea of men's superiority that dominates a number of earlier works of Northern Nigeria literary writers.

Zaynab Alkali's Presentation of Women in *Cobwebs and Other Stories* (1997)

Quite a number of women writers' of literary works in English in Northern Nigeria are University graduates, married and with flourishing career prospects. Zaynab Alkali is one of such female writers and is about the most celebrated of the female writers from Northern Nigeria. She holds Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in African Literature from Bayero University, Kano and is a Professor of African Literature in the Department of English, University of Maiduguri, Borno State, Nigeria. She has a number of written novels in English to her credit.

Zaynab Alkali is a product of society and therefore cannot be separated from her society. As an African woman writing about African women, her works are in a way conditioned by her nature, culture and beliefs over time. This probably can explain why the brand of feminism some critics may advocate for may not necessarily be apparently visible in her works.

This notwithstanding, the novels of Zaynab Alkali have centered on stories that firmly suggest her modest strides as a passionate advocate of radical change in the ways and manner that men regard and behave towards women in Northern Nigeria.

A statement at the back cover of Zaynab Alkali's *Cobwebs and Other Stories* gives a vivid summary of the novel as it reads thus:

The Cobwebs and Other Stories is Zaynab Alkali's fourth major work. It is a collection of Six Stories, of varying lengths, in which she introduces us to some salient features and dominant values of her society in wind-swept, semi-arid, North-Eastern Nigeria, Land of ancient Bornu Empire. Human relationships and foibles are handled with great sensitivity and composition, with gender issues coming to the fore. (Cobwebs... 1997-back cover)

Similarly, Jowitt (1997) in an article titled "Brushing the Cobwebs off Our Eyes" in the "New Nigeria Newspaper" on Zaynab Alkali's *Cobweb and Other Stories* says that:

The six stories though written at different times possess a common theme, each developing a variation. In each, a woman of independent mind and feeling strives to come to terms with complexity; usually the harshness of experience she undergoes is encounter. In fact, it is hard not to feel that we are meeting the same woman, whose point of view dominates each story. In all but one of the stories, the central figure is married, but in three of them, "The Cobwebs", "The House of Dust", and "Saltless Ash", her crucial experience is loneliness and despair that result when the marriage proves, from her point of view a failure. (p.13).

The first story "The Cobwebs" centres on the experiences of the protagonist identified as Mama. At the time of her introduction, she is already twenty three years old female character whose travails in the novel are overwhelming. She focuses on issues of self-realization and attainment of freedom and liberation for women from all inhibitions. Mama is married to Aliyu not by choice but by the fact that as a woman, she had no right to choose who husband would be. The society as she says decides for the woman. This can be attested to by the expression: "In Beta, woman did not have to think, the man always did the thinking for mankind" (p. 17). Aliyu is thirty three years old, married to another wife with a dozen of children from several mothers. He has no known job and one wonders what Mama, a university student is doing married to this man if not for injunctions of religious and societal beliefs.

Mama initially was to read medicine in the University but on the orders of Aliyu she had to read education. While in school, Mama gets involved with a boyfriend called Imam despite her marriage to Aliyu. This development looks western and alien to her culture but as it is, that seems to

be the only source of succour to Mama who is wrecked in the over zealousness of her estranged husband. No wonder we have Mama on returning to school with mountain of problems from her husband, going to see Imam as accounted for in the novel thus:

Mama visits Imam in the hostel for counselling ... she cried as she never did in a long time. And consequently, regardless of her marriage bond, Imam draw her into his arms.... They were close, closer than any of them could remember, closer and alone. Slowly and gently, he rocked her to and fro until the tears ceased. Just as slowly he eased her head unto the groove of his arms until they both felt comfortable, perhaps too comfortable on the long soft settee. (p. 40).

It is obvious that Zaynab Alkali presents Mama and eventually, Ladi (her sister) as female characters who have taken up the feminist ideology to address their plight. She shows Mama on the course of women liberation as she chooses to fall in love with Imam and go to Ladi's place instead of her matrimonial home. The discussion at Ladi's place also shows that Ladi who had to drop out of school to marry her husband is expressing a different view as she says: I no longer asked for laughter or a kind word from a husband. For me, recently, sister, what is happiness but a roof over my head and food to eat? (p. 53).

This liberation instinct as we are to see in Ladi's thinking makes way for her to resolve that after her Idda, she would go to Laleri and join a sewing institute for training and thereafter become gainfully employed. She is determined to make it in life so that no man would consider her a burden any more. In the other stories, we are introduced to Maaya, a devoted woman whose "entire life was devoted to the welfare of his (Abdu-zak-her husband) family" (p. 61). Unfortunately, Abdu-zak keeps another family and at death leaves Maaya in despair as narrated in the story "The House of Dust" and liberate themselves from practices that have continued over time to place them subjectively under men domination.

Abubakar Gimba's Presentation of Women in *Sacred Apples* (1994)

Abubakar Gimba hails from Niger State. He is an economist by training and remains one social scientist who has found himself in the literary scene. His novels are in no doubt familiar works to many readers and critics. To many literary artists, the works of Abubakar Gimba can be ranked as one of the most authentic voices from Northern Nigeria. That his home state government recognizes his efforts at literary development and features platform discourse in his honour at the Muazu Babangida Alivu (MBA) International Literary Colloquium readily testifies to his acceptance as a model.

As stated earlier, feminism is not an exclusive preserve of the female authors. There are in the feminist camp a number of male writers who are concerned with the interests and concerns of the womenfolk. If the paramount interest of the feminist writer is to uplift the status and roles of women, then Abubakar Gimba could be counted in the forefront of feminist writers, more so, of the Northern Nigeria extraction.

Abubakar Gimba has to his credit a number of novels. He exposes in his novel *Sacred Apples* (1994) his concern for the womenfolk. The dedication of the work shows his concern for the interest of the women. Thus, his dedication note reads:

For my mother and womankind that she represents, who know what the pains and joys of motherhood and wifehood as well as those who appreciate their womanhood!

The novel *Sacred Apples* is a constructive thoughtful story of a protagonist – Zahrah. This is one woman in search of true identity in modern society. She is brutally challenged by the issues of asserting her independence, freedom, marriage life and fulfillment in life. These challenging issues set the woman in search of solutions to her plight as against the traditional resignation to the perpetual state of docility and inactiveness that the womenfolk are known for. To have a woman challenge the state of a male dominated world is an aberration that owes its root to feminism.

Zahrah is educated and armed with a University degree but married to Yazid Awwal who does not show out rightly any significant disposition that can be considered superior to that of his life. The marriage lasts for six years with three children. For reasons that have to do with the traditional position of men, we are to see Yazid divorce Zahrah. At the time of the crisis, it is Zahrah that demonstrates maturity as we can see Yazid express in *Sacred Apples* (1994) that by giving his car to convey the ex-wife and the children to her grandmother, he is but doing a great favour, he said, because of the children, his children” (p. 6).

Zahrah is presented as a character with a higher sense of judgment as she does not even want the children to know that all was not well with the parents:

She didn't want any more heated arguments with the man. Besides, she had learnt that the course of peace is best served while in dispute with men if you let them remain on their high horses (p. 6)

As if the troubles were not mind disturbing enough, we can see her response to Umaymah, her elder daughter, when she sensed some trouble as she says: “He’s not happy; that is all”, “Because we are going away leaving him behind” (p. 7). Indeed, the uncommon stoic disposition as recorded in the reasons why she has to smile to convince her daughter that all is well with the parents is according to her, because: “Children must never be made witnesses to the souring of parental intimacies” (p. 8).

Zahrah is not to be carried away by the fact that as a woman, she has to depend on another person, particularly man, to assert her being. This we have demonstrated in her encounter with the demonstrators and hoodlums as the driver drives them home. Even at the shouts of “Kill them...! Burn the bloody car! ...”, (p. 13) she does not give up on her children as she pulls them closer to herself like a hen, her chicks in the face of a threatening eagle (p. 13). Her encounter with Dan Easker that nearly resulted in a rape is averted by her resort to spirituality - prayers.

As traditional as the grandmother is, we can see her praying for reconciliation but Zahrah sees this differently. This according to Zahrah is beyond redemption because Yazid has ignorantly and for purposes of lack of in-depth knowledge of Islamic precepts made three pronouncements on the matter of divorce. Thus, instead of contemplating going for reconciliation, we see Zahrah observing the three months waiting period (Iddah) before liberating herself fully and taking up a job facilitated by her brother Ya Shareef.

Suffice to mention that the efforts of Rasheed (a major in the army) and his wife, Mariam; in rescuing the children from the hoodlums and returning them to their mother endeared the two families together. This relationship opens the eyes of Zahrah to a number of issues that enable her to see herself beyond the restrictive horizons imposed on the womenfolk. In the course of this relationship, Mariam serves as a source of encouragement to Zahrah. She counsels her to forget the past and face the future. She recounts that Zahrah's fatal error is not taking a job and consciously surrendering her destiny into the hands of a man, without any counter indemnity. In response, to this development, we can see the awareness that begins to make Zahrah feel differently as she says:

Must conjugal contracts get adhered to according to a dual mode of reading-one loudly; the second is very silent whispers. The rights of the husband and the responsibilities of the wife get a loud reading, while the rights of the wife and the responsibilities of the husband get an inaudible whisper (p. 72).

She goes further to say that 'when the silent reading becomes audible, the woman gets her rights as if it were a privilege, and the man's responsibilities dressed like favour' (p.93).

Without any regrets, part of the liberation lessons Zahrah receives from Mariam is the need for the woman to retain her family name instead of remaining tied to her husband's name. Accordingly, she marvels at Mariam George Rasheed, her friend's name, as opposed to hers; Mrs. Zahrah Yazid — a man she is no longer married to. Zahrah taking up the new challenges abhors what she calls mothering by proxy" (p. 77). She is not prepared to allow someone else train her children as even as a working mother, she says, "motherhood is much more than physical outward caring ... it is complex of emotional ties, inexplicable forces". (p. 113). This belief translates to single motherhood that today has become a common practice.

A new lease of life has come upon Zahrah as she goes to assert that when men fail, they create a dependence syndrome in women. But this must not be so, as she submits that:

Which, (dependence syndrome) we try to fight by picking up a gauntlet, to meet our needs and prove that we can be masters of our destiny: (p. 81).

Being divorced does not send the woman into life of promiscuity. Infidelity or prostitution as some female characters in some novels have been portrayed to engage in over time. We are to see Zahrah taking the challenge of remarriage with a serious concern. Ya Shareef and others try as much as possible to convince her with soothing words such as think most men act out of concern for women" (p. 10).

Zahrah as we have shown is an epitome of simplicity, yet decisive when it comes to her roles, status, capability and capacity. She demonstrates at her place of work uncommon outstanding qualities that earn her promotion to the envy of Midioka. His defamation stories notwithstanding, we witness progression in Zahrah's life. She eventually gets remarried to Nousah who characteristic of Northern Nigerian men is having other wives.

Her experience with the other wives, particularly, Aalimah does not make her loose her senses. She acted when due and eventually relocates to another apartment to avoid distraction. She has personal security and empowerment guaranteed by her job. Although, she had to lose her husband to death for the sake of the “Sacred Apple” that Dan Easker and An-Najmu poisoned and gave the family to eat. She overcomes and forges ahead with her life.

Zahrah seeks freedom even for her daughter Umaymah by opposing her desire to marry her lecturer, Dr. Haaris. She as it were, desires that the daughter does not pass through her own kind of experience. Although with kind counsels from all friends and relations she eventually bows to her daughter’s desire.

Indeed, Abubakar Girnba presents in Zahrah a woman that demonstrates equal potentials with men, a woman that challenges societal practices and forges ahead to find solutions to her problems. As recorded in the protagonist’s own words, even when “they (men) all assume the image of personality of Al-Aswad”, she must settle “as a true career woman, not just a working mother” (p. 267). She preaches the need to seek knowledge by encouraging going to school and studying the blueprint which to her is the Quran. This she equally preaches to her daughter, Umaymah as she chooses to marry Dr. Haaris.

In all, she seeks freedom from all inhibiting agencies, for it is only by so doing that the women can realize their potentials in life and thereby remove themselves from perpetual bondage.

Conclusion

The epitome of the struggle for self-independence by the womenfolk just as, Zaynab Alkali places side by side, the good and bad effects of women liberation and women subjugation for society to learn from. This is elaborated in the activities of Mama as an educated girl taking on her husband Aliyu and her father as men given to women exploitation. In conclusion, we are left with no option than to take to the disposition that the two selected novelists have in their works represented women in an order that projects the changing roles and status of women from what it used to be in the past. This achievement, we cannot separate from the growing interest of these authors in feminism as a trend in literary discourse that desires to give women the opportunity to realize them themselves and develop their potentials to the fullest.

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Kamau Brathwaite's Environmental Sensibilities: An Ecocritical Reading of *Born to Slow Horses*

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Abstract

Postcolonial writers have taken time to explore the consequences of imperial expansion and colonialism on the environmental conditions of the erstwhile colonies. Impacts of postcolonial destruction are felt mostly in all the Caribbean Islands, which were built on plantation and land exploitation. These make Caribbean ecologies become area of interest to creative writers and critics from the region. While writers like Harris and Walcott have attracted praises for concentrating on Caribbean ecologies, little or no interest has been paid to Brathwaite's works in this direction. The pertinent question is that: it is possible for a writer of Brathwaite's knowledge of Caribbean history to omit such an important theme in his works as the history of this region is hardly separable from its environment? This paper is an ecocritical reading of selected poetry from Brathwaite's collection *Born to Slow Horses* (2005). Three poems in the collection, "The Master of Mary Jones", "Guanahani", "Namsetura" and "9/11" were purposively sampled and examined. The poems were subjected to context analysis with the intent to foreground the poet's concerns with nature and the environment. Braithwaite internationalizes his vision and treat the damaging effects of colonial and imperial activities around the world in continents far away from his Caribbean. The study reveals that Brathwaite's vision is internationalised and the damaging effects of human interactions with environment become a global concern. This paper concludes that Brathwaite, like other Caribbean

poets focuses on Caribbean and world ecology in his works. It is therefore recommended that other Brathwaite's poetry is open to ecological themes and requires to be explored further in this wise other than those examined in this study and critics should therefore concentrate more on this theme while appreciating these works.

Key Words: Environment, Postcolonialism, Ecocriticism, Caribbean and Landscapes.

Introduction

Since the 1990s, scholars of postcolonial preoccupation have focused on the destructive effects of colonial and imperialist incursion into the erstwhile postcolonial territories. The engagement with effects of colonialism on postcolonial landscapes informs Harris description of Caribbean landscape as "a landscape saturated by traumas of conquest" (Harris, 1992). The postcolonial critic traces the consequences of colonialism on the colonised states' vegetations and environments. Though Buell kicks against such radical adventurism, there is every likelihood that the consequences of colonialism are felt beyond the human psyche and in narrating the human history of colonialism, the consequences on the places where the events took place are not left out (Buell, 1995). This is evident in the imperial expansion drives which came with industrialisation and race for land acquisition in Africa and the Caribbean. The human history in Caribbean is intertwined with the natural environment history as Deloughery opines that the "Caribbean is one of the most important areas for an ecocritical discourse because the region's history does not allow for a facile division between humans and nature, an opposition that often determines the dominant ecocritical production of North America" (Glofelty, 1996, xviii)

While poetry by other prominent Caribbean writers like Glissant, Harris and Walcott have received critical attention as ecocritical works, there is dearth of works dedicated to Brathwaite's preoccupation with Caribbean and African ecocriticism. The dearth of works on Brathwaite's ecocriticism may have been due to the loud appeal to Brathwaite's obsession with cultural and historical themes to criticism. This paper is a study of the ecocritical features of Kamau Brathwaite's poetry *Born to Slow Horses*. Four poems from the collection, "The Master of Mary Jones", "Guanahani", "Namesetura" and "9/11" were chosen for this purpose.

There has been a continuous competition between anthropocentrism and anthropomorphism debate in ecocritical studies. While the former advocates the superiority of humans over other environmental elements, the latter advocates equal treatment of these elements as interdependent ecological variables. Considering Brathwaite's approach in the four poems understudy, this paper adopts Heise's (2016) multispecies justice as a theoretical framework. The theory proposes a holistic sense of ecological survival where both human and nonhuman forms enjoy equal rights for survival and can thrive without one causing harms to the other. Brathwaite has advocated collective survival of all environmental elements through his poetry.

Conceptual Clarifications

The word 'ecocriticism' was created from a combination of two words 'eco' and 'criticism' both of which are derivatives of the Greek words 'Oikos' and 'Kritis' which all together mean "house judge". 'Oikos' refers to nature/environment while 'Kritis' is a peacemaker who wants the house kept in good shape. Ecocriticism then connotes the study of the earth/universe. Buell (1995) defines ecocriticism as "the environmentally-oriented study of literature and (less often) the arts more

generally, “the study of the relation between literature and environment conducted in a spirit of commitment to environmentalist praxis” (p. 430). In another study, Buell, Heise and Thomber (2011) identify two phases in the study of ecocriticism. According to them, the first phase, which they call first wave ecocriticism, focused on such genres as “nature writing, nature poetry and wilderness fiction”. The second phase which they tag second phase criticism inclines towards environmental justice issue and degraded landscapes just as seriously as “natured landscapes” (419). This classification portrays the multiplicity that resonates in the field. In his previous work, Buell identifies aspects of literary ecocriticism to include environmental criticism, literary-environmental studies, literary ecology, literary environmentalism or green cultural studies, ecopoetics and environmental literary criticism.

Buell, in the same study, states that ecocriticism has three duties: the scientific study of nature; the scholarly analysis of cultural representations; and the political struggle for more sustainable ways of inhabiting the natural world (Buell 1995). Some of the ingredients that might be considered in an ecocritical texts, in his view, include:

- the presentation of the nonhuman environment not merely as a framing device but as a presence that begins to suggest that human history is implicated in natural history;
- extension of interest to elements other than human;
- human accountability to the environment;’ and
- * some sense of the environment as a process rather than as a constant or a given is at least implicit in the text (Buell, 1995).

The term ecocriticism according to Glotfelty (1996), is the “study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment” (xviii). He also comes up with list of some of the pertinent issues that ecocritics or ecotheorists might address when approaching a work of literature. They include:

- the role the physical setting plays in the plot of literature;
- how metaphor of the land in a work of literature influences the way it is treated;
- should in addition to place whether or not race, and gender become a new critical category; and
- ways and to what extent the environmental crisis is seeping into contemporary literature and popular culture.

Larsen (2007) in a similar vein defines ecocriticism as a discipline that “deals with the way literature contributes to the articulation, interpretation and transformation of boundary between nature, culture or, events broader, between the non-human and human” (p. xviii). While nature remains the centerpiece of ecocriticism, it is noticeable that humans have received more attention than other natural elements. This stance has prompted Ihaka (2018) to crave for a balanced ecocritical explorations, that would pay equal attention to both anthropocene and anthromorpheme elements.

Ecocriticism and Caribbean Literature

The importance of Caribbean ecology in the region’s literature has been widely acknowledged in history from the dawn of Columbus’ voyage but interest in the Caribbean landscape did not begin until in the 90s. The lateness in awareness to ecocriticism in Caribbean literature, according to (Deloughery, 2011), is not a result of lack of concern about environment by her writers but rather a rise in ecological thinking as a methodology in the 1990. The history of the Caribbean points to European and American greed for land grab and exploitation of both human and natural resources. Hence,

ecocriticism is a non-negligible subject in the history of the region. A reassessment exploring effects of colonialism and imperialism revealed a lot of damages on the flora, fauna, human and nonhuman and nature in this region. Nature in Caribbean history is not trivialised because nature and the region's histories are intricately intertwined.

Glissant opines that “in the Caribbean, an engagement with the environment means an entanglement with the history of empire and postcolonial nation building. This history of empires, diaspora, and resettlement necessarily foregrounds the ways in which the violence of plantation societies ruptured continuous human relationship to place” (quoted in Deloughrey 265). The history of imperialism, colonialism, migration and indenture is important for the region's people's identity formation. So exploring ecocriticism in Caribbean literature is deeper than we realise and it is complex ecologies. Harris (1992) warns that “this matter of landscape is far more important than we realise. And it is essential to see how far reaching this is, because unfortunately in the humanities it is taken for granted that landscape is passive” (quoted in Deloughrey 266). These critics' assertion all confirms Mitchell's (1994) warning that the idea of landscape should “not be reduced to an object to be seen or a text to be read, but as a process by which social and subjective identities are formed” (1).

A study of first poetry collection, *The Arrivants*, is necessary to foreground Brathwaite's ecocritical vision in his poetry as a whole. Ecocritical elements are present in *The Arrivants* as Brathwaite deploys nature-related words displayed in images of sea, lands and plants in Africa and Caribbean environments. An instance of this is displayed in the extract below:

It will be a long long time before we see
this land again, these trees
again, drifting inland with the sound
of surf, smoke rising
It will be a long long time before we see
these farms again, soft wet slow green
again: Aburi, Akwamu,
mist rising (*The Arrivants* 11).

He mourns the rich African vegetation that the “Arrivants” are leaving behind as they are forcibly removed to the new world. Added to these are several references to sea and other littoral images that also point to the ecocritical essence of the poem. He describes Caribbean landscape in the first poem of *Mother Poem* as a coral island with an underground water supply, filtered through the porous limestone coral rock:

The ancient water sources of my island
echo of river, trickle, worn stone,
the sunken voice of glitter inching its pattern to the sea,
memory of form, fossil, erased beaches high above the eaten
boulders of St. Phillip.
my mother is a pool. (*Mother Poem* 3)

Above all, Brathwaite's theory of tidalectics reveals the importance of the sea as ecocritical imagery in his poetry. DeLoughrey (2007) has described tidalectics as a “geopoetic model of history” and a “methodological tool that foregrounds how a dynamic model of geography can elucidate island history and cultural production, providing the framework for exploring the complex and shifting entanglement between

sea and land, diaspora and indigeneity, and routes and roots” (2). Furthermore, “tidalectics” engages what Brathwaite calls an ‘alter/native’ historiography to linear models of colonial progress. This ‘tidal dialectic’ resists the synthesising telos of Hegel’s dialectic by drawing from a cyclical model, invoking the continual movement and rhythm of the ocean. Tidalectics also foregrounds alter/native epistemologies to western colonialism and its linear and materialist biases” (2). Reckin (2003) provides a helpfully simple definition of tidalectics by describing it as a ‘trans-oceanic movement-in-stasis’ to which five core characteristics are attributed (2).

Ecocriticism in *Born to Slow Horses*

Brathwaite published *Born to Slow Horses* a decade after the publication of his *X/Self*. At the end of *Born to Slow Horses*, Brathwaite explicitly defines the new phase of his writing as a continuation of his “post-catastrophe” poetry, referring to the work he completed in the years following three major traumatic events in his personal life – his wife’s death from cancer, Hurricane Gilbert’s destruction, and the experience of being assaulted and robbed in his own home – all of which he documents in *Shar* (1990), *The Zea Mexican Diary* (1993), and *Trench Town Rock* (1999). Brathwaite names this period of intense personal traumatising his “Time of Salt,” which he clarifies “as the years 1986-1990 which witnessed in rapid catastrophic succession, the death of his wife Zea Mexican (1986), the destruction by hurricane of their home & archives at Irish Town in the high hills outside Kingston (1988) and his own near death at the hands of brigand gunmen in his Kingston apartment in 1990, all chronicled in his groundbreaking ‘postcatastrophe’ work” (BTSH 142).

“1986-1900” is not a mistake here; it appears that way in the collection, possibly testifying to the way Brathwaite manipulates time and causation in these recent poems. At the same time, in this short third-person autobiographical passage, Brathwaite gives the reader the impression that his body of work has progressed in a somewhat linear sense, explaining that his “post-catastrophe” work here has given way to a new phase which, he explains, “should be read in the context of KB’s post-Arrivants, postAncestors, postSalt work” (*BTSH*, 142). A reference is made to this period in ‘Kumina’ when the poet’s persona (his wife) says:

on the nineteenth day afta my husbann gone

A seem so long it seem

wifatha now altho / nvrknw no fatha

1

My husbann gone back

To the States to finish up im work

-few insights ago he try to touch me. wake me up yu know

As to comfort?Det would help

...

ah well, ... he had his 10 years of salt already an he went through hell

and now he marred me the poor man like he have to wear my hell

he never rush me. dough ..e mean he mean me well

(BTSH 80 emphasis mine).

While the emphasis on the centrality of catastrophe to Caribbean literature or loss suggests some sense of continued, unresolved loss, the admitted transition from his “post-catastrophe” work to his “postSalt” phase itself indicates some process of working through those events which shaped and continue to shape his poetics. However, it takes place through an expansion into what Brathwaite calls “a significant transboundary development” that draws even the regionally focused poems out of their regional boundaries. As he explains, “*Born to Slow Horses* is the first major appearance in this country of this new (?4th phase) of Brathwait(e)’s poetry; a work which in a sense, surveys or makes natural reference to the entire tidalectics, but at the same time marking, even with the most remarkable of his ‘Caribbean’ poems here, a significant transboundary development” (BTSH 143). McSweeney gives the following remarks in his review of the text:

Brathwaite’s new book, *Born to Slow Horses* (Wesleyan University Press), represents a redoubling of all these energies. It’s a composite text, including prophesy and anecdote, drum songs and jazz riffs, unconventional forms working personal, national, and international events into the mother matter of history and memory. The book also recounts a visionary incident in which the specter of an ancestral slave woman, called Namsetoura, appeared to Brathwaite at his home in CowPastor, Barbados. An angry Namsetoura revealed the spot to be a sacred gravesite and charged Brathwaite not to leave his land, which had been expropriated by the government of Barbados for an airport road. This life-changing visitation has recharged Brathwaite’s style and sense of purpose and also locked him in a battle with his government which is stretching towards its tenth year.

Indeed, *Born to Slow Horses* is one of Brathwaite texts that form and project his vision about Caribbean as a region and the world at large. It touches many aspects of interactions between humans, nonhumans, landscapes and several concerns. Its cornerstone is catastrophe which reverberates in all ramifications of the text.

Brathwaite describes the Caribbean ecological formation as a violent of slavery, indenture and colonialism. The cornerstone of *Born to Slow Horses* is catastrophes and therefore it seems absolutely impossible that such a text would be far from the histories of trauma that focus on the interaction between environment and human. In fact, one of his major concerns in the text is the after-effect of colonial and imperial expansion which brought with it modernisation that destroys the natural habitats (Abegunde 2021).

The Master of Mary Jones

This is the first poem in the collection. “The Master of Mary Jones” The poem laments the industrial killing of sharks prompted by the urge to cater for the hospitality industries, a direct consequence of colonialism, that has become a booming business in the Caribbean. As his usual practices in his other collections, Brathwaite tries to bring both the victims and perpetrators together thus making the stories more real and poignant. The encounter between the fisherman and a fish clearly portrays this fact. In this poem, Braithwaite tries to bring in human (the fisherman), the sea and the fish together giving the defective nature of colonialism which instituted tourist attractions – a major factor for economic expansion and ecological damages. As the industry pays handsomely, the human actors, who themselves are part of the eco-system is not bothered about the effects of their fishing activity.

Instead, the fisherman is desperate to make his income. He could not sleep throughout the night of his expedition:

**For what have he watch in the fish
Cold night, sewing the leviathans into his eyes .
For what have e wish in his deep fishing dream for the white
reed hair of hugging bottomless tides?
he have sail so long and have sea-
saw sea-watch, silently sit, waiting the green
bach fathomless fish to cross his traps with its tail (BTSH 3)**

Brathwaite's preoccupation with the sea is traceable to his first trilogy *The Arrivants*. He perceives the sea in both negative and positive light. He sees it as a harbinger of slavery and the misfortune made possible through the contact between Africa and European colonisers. Brathwaite contrasts the sea with the land by placing the fisherman 'deep in the heart of the sea'. Again, the sea in this poem is the contact zone between the fisherman and the fish. The last stanza expresses the fisherman's joy when he succeeds in trapping the fish. His joy knows no bound as he would

**... drag his wish from the sea
tackle the moon and cut down green
leaf sun . blue boy again in the fan tail
day of his dream come true in the fathomless fish
catch in his all night eyes .
At last he cd turn in the rain blue white
Of his foam joy haul and bird sail home on the tides (BTSH 6)**

The sea, which loses one of its inhabitants, is disturbed throughout the night. The poet conveys this notion by referring to the sea as 'tides' most of times. The sea that is important for the common good now becomes the 'lonely fisherman's'.

Braithwaite deploys colour imagery to demonstrate his preoccupation with ecocritical elements like sea, plants and even times and seasons. All these elements are, in one way or the other, disturbed by the fisherman's ambition (ref to the first stanza quoted above). Phrases like 'green back cloths'; 'black cloth dark' (dark night); 'green back fathomless fish' (fish), 'green star' (planet), 'fain blue white'. All these colours are linked to planets or environment: green is to vegetation, blue to sea, rainbow itself is of greater importance for its connection to the ecosystem.

“Guanahani” is a compendium on the world’s landscape with each section dedicated to different countries and topographies. Crucially, his journey by air, from the poet’s perspective, took place on 12th October, 1492, balancing it against Columbus’ expedition that changed the world history and ecology. The timing and the medium adopted in this poem afford the poet a means of critically reassessing consequences of Columbus’ voyage. Columbus in this context stands as symbol of colonialism, imperialism and their European expansion agenda. By using the airplane flight, the altitude and speed of the plane Braithwaite evokes a particular ease of passage between boundaries and at the same time provides a telescopically penetrating insights into the landscapes and people of the continents – all through the flight of imagination. In all sections of this poem, Braithwaite’s consciousness of the times, the seas, the land, the plants and even the humans inhabiting these places are foregrounded.

The first two sections of the poem tell us its major subject-matter which is a description of physical properties of the environments over which the personae travels:

(1)

How come

Along the East Coast of North America.

Almost to noon . the thin white line of the long beach

the clouds coming right down on the water like ice flows

like thousands of tiny floating highlands in an orange tint of water

what makes me say Soufriere at the beginning of the world

(2)

The midday now extracts the colour from its genesis

so that there is this dark blue . deep-smoke almost indigo

a total absence of mango . illava of the land

lakes make mirrors . wriggles of silver rivers

spots spots spots of bright islands in the dead landscapes

turning away from the Atlantic at 11:34 on this Friday October 12 (BTSH 7).

Braithwaite expertly crafted the poem in a way that each section focuses on a particular geographical landscape dealing with the historical features, vegetation and the people that inhabit such places and memories commemorating ruins, rubbles and dissipation of loss into “landscape and memory” which allows him to cover both animate and inanimate habitants of the environment.

By historicising the landscapes and the seas, Braithwaite is able to bring together the past events in this region with the present events. In section 8, he brings together England 78 vibes with situations in central Asia lamenting man's inhumanity to man in Guantanamo, a prison facility where hardened terrorists are broods on the ephemerality of history:

And i realize that i have been thinking of them all morning from this high

Freeling air. Watching the clouds changing shade into the fate

of their future . into landscape and memory

into the bleak beautiful meaning of reality

plummeting towards my own horse of ruins

& dreams . of how they too will be forgotten in time (BTSH 11-12)

The history the poet tries to revive will also suffer a similar fate just like the landscapes have been damaged, destroyed and forgotten. This portrays Brathwaite's melancholic stance which he maintains throughout in *Born to Slow Horses* - he sees everything in ruins and hopelessness. The so-called modern man is not different from the man in the Columbus generation.

Section 10 looks back at the destruction of the Arawaks and the other tribesmen who were first dwellers of the islands in Guanaahani. The place had been thrown into darkness since its invasion by Columbus and his crew followed by slave trade, indenture and colonialism. The section is not silent on the destructive effects of human activities on all other environmental elements like land, sea, ice and vegetations:

(10)

At 12:50 pm

Lucaya Abacos Andros & now Eleuthera comes into view

coral necklaces writing on the water

cosmograms of fish and the halls of sunken ships

hieroglyphs of the beginnings of blue

and now it begins to get very green

like the first ever light which will be Guanaani. a light

**you have nvr seen before. like at the back yr eye
in its private room
like at the bottom of the ocean beyond sunset & dawn
beyond angels & borealis. come
from the depths of the sea. continent
of dead ice. From the land (BTSH 12)**

The section 11 is a continuation of the themes in section 10. It begins with ‘odales’, a neologic word formed from the combination of ‘oh’ and ‘dales’ (meaning valley) but it marks a return to his own land. This section is full of words with etymological background in nature. For instance, we encounter words like “thunder lightning, landscape, mountain, sky” all pointing to the poem as ecocritical. They, in one way or the other, relate to weather, physical environment and so on.

More than other poems in this collection, Namsetoura remains the most discussed by Braithwaite not only because it addresses the consequences of slavery and its attendant brutality of migrants but also because it addresses the central problem of modernisation and its damaging effects on the Caribbean ecology. Some years before he wrote *Born to Slow Horses*, the government of Barbados handed him a quit notice to vacate his house at ‘CowPastor’ on a flimsy unethical excuse...” (McSweeney, 2005 np). The land had been expropriated by the government for an airport road. As he questions the authority of the government, he encountered the ghost of the slave woman whose corpse had been thrown into the forest without proper burial rites. The ghost implores Braithwaite to intervene and stop the government’s proposed desecration of her rest place.

**the grave
hidden w/in the slump of prickly man
-peaba. red cordes trees
& countless clammachery leaves
the spider warn me of her entry
trie to prevent my photograph
ruin three lenses brek down the hi-tec pentax
Camaraderie
I click de pic
-ture w/ a simple borrow k-
dax
(BTSH 118)**

In the above extract, Brathwaite describes his encounter with the ghost. Brathwaite strives to capture her image with his camera but failed. All he was able to capture is a faint one-eyed image of Namesetoura after three lenses were damaged. he narrates this encounter with the ghost in another interview he granted in 2005:

What had happened was that when I was told that I would have to leave CowPastor, I began to photograph everything I could on the pasture, and the pasture itself is about two miles long, and my little area, which is on a ridge between the sea and the hill, is only two acres. And I decided that I would try to photograph everything I could as a kind of memory bank for what I assumed I was going to leave. And on this afternoon when the sun was at two o'clock, three o'clock, when my wife and I were in this little clump of bush which was just behind the house, what you call the garden, and the sun suddenly illuminated this magnificent spider's web, with a spider at the very center of it. So naturally I went to photograph it. I could see the spider perfectly clearly through my naked eye, but as soon as I looked through the view finder of the lens there was no spider, there was no web, there was nothing! And this happened, of course, two or three times. Each time I went to take the picture there was no evidence of reality. So finally I decided to take the picture anyway. And as soon as I did that the lens split right across its equator (McSweeney np).

Therefore, the ghost earns the privilege of eternal rest. The phrase 'coral spine' valorises this assertion. The phrase signifies that the Namesetoura's bones had already become part of the land and therefore the land should be defended against the government takeover. Namesetoura, like other deceased slaves, laments the brutality she suffered in the hands of the slave masters and thereafter her dead body thrown away in Cow Pastor without proper burial rites. She calls on Brathwaite to defend the land, which serves as the final rest place for her and other dead slaves, against the government's order. The call is for the protection of not just the graves but also the Caribbean ecology.

And what she tells me is two things: first of all, she's been here for three hundred years, and no one has ever thought of looking for her, no one has ever thought of a burial, no one has ever thought of respect, so her soul is in a kind of limbo or perturbation. And, secondly, that here I am now to disturb her peace, on the grounds that I am a Caribbean, Barbadian poet, but that as far as she's concerned, I'm like all the other people through the last three hundred years, don't know a damn about her, about her condition—her life here on the plantation as a woman, her life as an uprooted African princess or priestess or whatever she was.... And the third thing she did was, she implied that if want to really write a poem, having discovered her burial ground, and that if I was to be a man, she said, using 'man' in a very sexual manner—if I was to be a man, I would have to have the balls to be able to defend her pasture. That was her indictment to me, her declaration to me that afternoon. And it so happens that soon after that I began to think no longer of leaving Cow Pastor as we'd intended to do, but I decided, why not stay here and try to defend the situation (McSweeney np)

This encounter further energises his determination to protest against the government and explore more what constitutes the Caribbean slaves' past. The encounter also confirms Deloughery's position that Caribbean ecology is intertwined with the Caribbean human history.

Brathwaite has consistently emphasised his works' close affinity to history and catastrophe. By recounting this encounter, he pointedly made it known that the 'Namesetoura' has become part of the ecology. The text as a poems collection is grounded in disasters and catastrophes. This allows Brathwaite to project more his ecocritical vision. He keeps on emphasizing the necessity of arts to dwell on these phenomena as they often shape human relationships with their history and environments. From his preoccupation with the Middle Passage in *The Arrivants*, he takes on the global environment in *Born to Slow Horses*.

One way Brathwaite reflects on these themes is in his word associations and repetitions. The language of "9/11" flows based on this free association of sounds and meaning of words that evokes words for other disasters discussed in the collection. Brathwaite goes back to reintroduce a Jazz performance that took place in 1967 to conjure the images of the twin towers – "haunted by twins" (BTSH 92). "voices of falling wires. crumbol /-ing towers long before his time here flare. ing future" (BTSH 92). At its height, the snare-drum sounding "ashes ashes ashes" of the poem lends a strange prophetic element to its images of falling towers which form a "smouldering wound" on the cityscape:

the body body body bodies pouring
from this dark Manhattan stromboli
into dim catacombs of disappearing
love & grace & pain & smouldering wound
[...]
altho we know it coming even while we count
the deed the dead the cruel lame the gnash the cost
the small the blind the debris falling from the air of shar
& lashes lashes lashes. such lash. erations of the hurt
& herd. the blunted flash & flint of oriole
& warp & timbrel flesh upon the manacle
flesh become salt. salt become
char & ruell achar ashes ashes ashes
upn the lips upon my lids until this now curlin
cowl of howl & tears. (BTSH 97-8)

For instance, later in the poem we are shifted along by "o hero scream . Hiroshima . au quelle dommage / which Agent Ornage kora" (BTSH, 98). Here, the "hero scream" of the fireman in one of the towers sonically prompts the invocation of Hiroshima; the found phrase "au quelle dommage" [*sic*] is then linked to a deliberately misspelled Agent Orange, whose "Or-" syllable flows into the kora, a West African

string instrument made from a calabash which, in turn, brings the reader's focus back to the musical riffs and tropes of the poem. This one line, which through sonic associations links the events of September 11, 2001 with World War II and the Vietnam War also problematically strings together the "hero" victim of 9/11 with two events in which the United States perpetrated massive human and environmental damage – the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and the dispensing of herbicides over rural Vietnam.

Later in the poem, the image of "*so so so so so many*" people fleeing lower Manhattan over the Brooklyn Bridge evokes countless other disasters on which the speaker "looks back":

our souls sometimes far out ahead already of our surfaces
and our life looking back
salt. as in Bhuj. in Grenada. Guernica. Amritsar. Tajikistan
the suppur-stricken cities of the plains of Aetna
the young window-widow baby-mothers of the prostitutes .
looking back looking back as in Bosnia. the Sudan. Chernobyl
Oaxaca terremoto incomprende. al'fata el Jenin. the Bhopal
babies sucking toxic milk. (*BTSH* 100-101)

Listed like this, natural disasters like the volcanic eruptions of Martinique's Mount Pelée in 1902 and Indonesia's Krakatoa in 1883 are undifferentiated from colonial violence like the Jallianwala Bagh massacre in Amritsar, which is in turn undifferentiated from the civil wars in Bosnia and the Sudan. The post-apocalyptic volcanic landscapes of "the sulphur-stricken cities of the plains of Aetna. Pelée. Ab Napoli & Krakatoa" are made comparable to the landscapes of industrial disasters like those in Chernobyl and Bhopal, and other massacres and conflicts that have punctuated recent history. Significantly, the speaker's comment, "*i had not thought death / had undone so many*" (p. 100) produces a tone of depressive recognition. This style is made possible by Brathwaite's choice of words. According to Sara (2009)

All this movement of language(s) creates syncopated rhythms, and we should not forget that the musicality of Brathwaite's language derives also from blues and jazz, so much that the entire text seems to be a score read on his poetic notion of tidalectics, in which echoes and repetitions reproduce the ebbs and flows of the sea, the notes appear and disappear as horses' tracks on the beach. To support this osmotic exchange between music and poetry the title "9/11 Hawk" dominates, to remember the 'big jazz saxophonist Coleman 'Hawk' Hawkins, whose Body and Soul was the audio background to Brathwaite's public lecture of this poetry (103).

Conclusion

This paper has revealed that Kamau Brathwaite valorises the relationship between literature and physical environment, thus emphasising the inevitable interactions between the human and the non-human, and applying ecological concepts and precepts to literary forms and studies. Throughout his poetry, Brathwaite never neglects the role environmental elements play in shaping his regions'

(Africa and Caribbean) history from the precolonial to the modern era. He pays attention to the natural elements, a subject that constantly permeates his texts as he establishes a great affinity between nature and human history. He advocates an environment where humans do not constitute threats to existence of nonhuman forms and stresses the integration of the elements of the entire ecosphere, and that everything in the universe is closely related to everything else. He makes use of his senses in interacting and integrating with all the elements of the ecosystem. The collection, *Born to Slow Horses* is a demonstration of that vision.

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Femme Fatale and its Tragic Consequences in Wole Soyinka's *A Dance of the Forests*

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Abstract

Femme fatale is one of the social constructions of womanhood. It conveys the deep-rooted idea that some women are intrinsically destructive by virtue of their exceptional and irresistible beauty. This study is specifically concerned with interrogating gender stereotypes that are often found in works of literature. This is why it investigates femme fatale and its tragic consequences in Wole Soyinka's *A Dance of the Forests*. The methodology for the study is qualitative in nature and is hinged on Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalytic theory. The paper argues that the concept of femme fatale sits tangentially against the women while neglecting other factors such as male tragic flaw, inordinate desire, ambition, personal choices, ignorance, overwhelming influence and impetuosity on the part of the male gender which activate the seemingly destructive nature of femme fatale. The study reveals that, though the woman is a passive agent of tragedy and her beauty a catalyst for destruction, she is not entirely to blame for the tragedy of the men who are involved in relationships with her. Her charming beauty associates her with destructive tendencies but she cannot solely be the carrier of fatality without the contributing actions and personal choices of the men who usually are termed victims. The study recommends that the factors which facilitate the destructive nature of femme fatale should be taken into consideration in literary discourses so that the concept of femme fatale will not be restricted to the alluringly beautiful woman alone as the carrier of the fatality.

Keywords: Beauty, Femme Fatale, Patriarchy, Seductive, Tragedy

Introduction

Femme fatale has always been an archetype of a fatal or dangerous woman in literary works. It is a phenomenon employed in Humanistic Studies to explain a situation in which, a beautiful and alluring woman is seen to be consistently, the source of disaster or even death to her partner or lover or even herself. The femme fatale concept has over time been used to describe a woman, who, basically through her feminine charms or nature, is assumed to cause pain, suffering and tragedy for her lover and, by extension, the society as vividly portrayed in the selected text. The belief in femme fatales is supported by the attractive and fascinating tales surrounding them in literary, mythological and religious tales the world over. The tales of femme fatale are accepted with child-like consciousness for those who, though believe and accept it, yet have not experienced it. It is a trend in every culture, which is infused into mythology and literature. Thus, it becomes obvious that writers' ideas emanate from the prevailing norms or perceptions in their socio-cultural environments as reflected in the play.

The very idea that constitutes femme fatale is as old as humanity. Originating in ancient times and being found to have existed in Judeo-Christian religion, as evidenced in the Biblical story of Adam and Eve, and Samson and Delilah (Ruth Markus 188), femme fatale is presented as inextricably linked with beauty, amorous attraction, desire, enigma and fascination as well as with manipulation, peril, misfortune and downfall. Arguably, the concept of femme fatale is as old as memory. Its very existence in mythology, folklore, literature, film, and, of course, history, makes it popular at all times and its popularity entrenched in the psyche of the society. However, it transforms to reflect the social views of the times and it draws upon existing myth and history to create myth and history.

It is noteworthy that when a man is infatuated with a woman, he becomes entangled in highly dangerous or compromising situations with her without thinking about the consequences of his actions. However, society tends to project the blame for male weakness or destruction unto female beauty and purported seductiveness without taking into account other factors which activate the seemingly destructive nature of femme fatale as reflected in the play under study. Additionally, the study demonstrates that even though people have been made to believe that some women are dangerous and destructive on account of their beauty, and the reason they are labelled "femme fatales", it is a patriarchal stereotyped narrative that does not consider the roles men play in their relationships with these women that lead to their tragedy. This study, therefore, attests to the fact that there is no femme fatale story without the involvement of men's actions which emanate from their tragic nature which, motivate their inordinate desire and the personal choices they make. Essentially, even though myths have been used to explain certain things that have puzzled man since ancient times and they have also been held as truth at one time in the history of a people, the myth of femme fatale seems no longer able to withstand rational scrutiny in the face of present critical ambience where various interpretive tools abound.

Literature Review

Tugce Ozdinc states that femme fatale is charming to the degree of enchantment. Her beauty, her voice, her words, or anything about her can be mesmerising. Her charming attitude is like a spell for others, pulling especially men towards her (178). Thus, drawing upon the negative labelling of some women, many scholars such as Mario Praz, Patrick Bade, Robert Greene, Virginia Allen, William Shakespeare, Wole Soyinka, Zulu Sofola, and Elechi Amadi have examined the concept of femme

fatale and have come to the conclusion that exceptionally beautiful women are seductive and deadly to men. As illustrated in the lives of the central female characters, these scholars situate beautiful women as the tragic objects of men's attraction and destruction. Despite the fact that the phenomenon of femme fatale is not new, it has generated a lot of confusion, anxiety, and controversy about what a femme fatale is and what she is not; how she is expected to behave and what repercussions emerge from the stated expected behaviour. This corroborates Edith Hamilton's assertion that, scholars differ widely, and will no doubt continue to do so (21).

Though Mario Praz, Patrick Bade, and Virginia Allen regard femme fatale as a sexual cannibal, a predator who is fascinated with death and pain and a willingness to destroy (*Femme Fatale* 34), studies have shown that the purported destructive image of beautiful women as femme fatales and their various negative representations and interpretations in works of art, is caused by the perpetuation of the myth of the fall of man which has been deeply entrenched in the modern psyche, and it is responsible for both the reinforcement and justification of women's beauty as being intrinsically seductive and destructive. This argument is sustained by Kate Millett when she asserts that myth is, of course, a felicitous advance in the level of propaganda, since it often bases its arguments on ethics or theories of origin (51).

Martha Vicinus corroborates the argument that "negative images of women" are connected with their sexuality, often depicted as predatory and positioned contiguously to witchcraft and enchantment (83). Joy L. Ramirez's stance lends credence to Vicinus' position when she asserts that the woman's fatality is not just thematic, but it has to do with the ineluctability of her representations and even the inevitably fixed set of meanings connected to her image either during the high point of her representation in the late nineteenth century or in more recent, arguably, post-modern versions of her appearance (189). This aligns with Diane Hoeveler, who, in *Romantic Androgyny: the Women Within*, asserts that, the ambiguities and conflicts between female appearance and reality consistently characterise femme fatale (196).

This argument is further sustained by E. A. J. Honigmann who posits that all stereotypes are misleading. Consequently, we are challenged to locate beautiful women beneath the mask, and to reconsider society's stereotype thinking more generally and the stereotypical judgements that society takes for granted (61). Studies have shown that Janey Place's description of femme fatale as the dark lady, the spider woman, and the evil seductress who tempts man and brings about his destruction (35) is one of the oldest themes in literature. However, in her article titled "The Femme Fatale: American Horror Story and These Deadly Women" posted on December 29, 2014 Sophie Raine states that femme fatale can only lead men into temptation if it is what they desire, and despite the fact that they are always quick to put the blame on the woman as a seductress, it is ultimately their tragic nature which propels their inordinate desire and personal choices for pleasure as well as their lack of willpower that causes them to yield to her, a statement this research demonstrates.

Jennifer Hedgecock takes the argument further when she avers that, femme fatale affects men and must have an effect on them; but that unless the male protagonist is present, the woman is not fatal (9). In "The Dread of Woman", Karen Horney, a Psycho-Analytical Psychiatrist, describes how male fears of castration and dread of female sexuality are projected onto women and the women are objectified in order for men to never have to deal directly with their fear, but only to face the projected "threat" of female sexuality (350). Horney's argument is sustained by James Maxfield's when he states

that femme fatale is actually only a catalyst; in the end it is the men who are destructive to themselves (Maxfield 14) on account of their inherent tragic nature which motivates their inner cravings and quest for pleasure and gratification derived from women who are conceived of as femme fatales.

It is worthy of note that the different definitions and interpretations of femme fatale corroborate Praz's assertion that "there is no established type of the Fatal woman in the way there is an established type of the Byronic hero" (201). In fact, a critical look at these definitions of femme fatale reveals some similarities as well as differences. Thus, it is completely obvious that critical opinions about conceptions of femme fatale will continue to be sampled based on points of view but such opinions are as good as the critics make them appear. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that, femme fatale is a symbolic vista of a door which gives illuminating spectacle of the world, the complexity of human motives, and men's inherent tragic nature, tragic flaw, ambition, inordinate desire, overwhelming influence, ignorance, personal choice and impetuosity that lead to their tragedy.

Soyinka's *A Dance of the Forests* has uniquely and distinctively attracted commendable critical attention from various critics. The critical works on this dramatic text individually bear convincing evidence of the portrayal of the debased and stereotypical image of beautiful and alluring women as femme fatales as well as their negative representations in various works of art. Some critics are of the view that femme fatale is a stereotype that Soyinka has repeatedly used in his works as reflected in the selected text. John Ebimobewe Yeseibo, while quoting Banham *et al*, states that in a raft of mainly male-authored plays, women are seen as either angelically virtuous or more often, as dangerous, duplicitous and rapaciously greedy. According to him, Nelly Furman captures this ugly scenario when she says "in a world defined by man, the trouble with woman is that she is at once an object of desire and an object of exchange, valued on the one hand as a person in her own right, and on the other considered simply as a relational sign between" (77).

Mary Crawford and Rhoda Unger observe that for Walter Lipman, stereotypes are culturally determined pictures that intrude between an individual's cognitive faculties and his or her perceptions of the world. Gender stereotypes are therefore consensual beliefs about the different characteristics of men and women (49). According to Yeseibo quoting Cheryle Johnson's "Class and Gender", "Both indigenous patriarchy and imposed colonial patriarchal customs and laws figure in women's oppression" (78). This corroborates Warren's argument, who, while quoting Stratton, asserts that Soyinka has mentioned to Sylvia Bryan that he uses women figures as symbols and essences (89). Idemudia-Uwadinma, while commenting on Wole Soyinka's *Kongi's Harvest* and *A Dance of the Forests* argues that even though there are prominent female characters that are portrayed even stronger than some male characters, there seems to be a conscious effort by Soyinka to portray these women though as strong characters but in roles that are more derogatory than popular (3).

Nagueyalti Warren avers that at the core of Soyinka's social consciousness, a feminist reading of his works leads to and leaves the question of whether or not he supports patriarchy (81). Nevertheless, M. Vishnupriya's assertion that Segi is a femme fatale corroborates Carol Boyce Davies' argument in her essay on the characterisation and stereotypical portrayal of women in Soyinka's plays, where, according to Warren, she writes that, "a feminist reading of Soyinka reveals enough female stereotypes to suggest a definite sexist bias against women (88). Biodun Jeyifo notes that there is a highly visible group of feminist critics who have taken Soyinka to task on the theme of gender and its representation in his plays. And indeed, the world of Soyinka's drama is intensively, normatively male-

centered (97). This coheres with Rowland Amaefula's position that the preponderance of patriarchs as first generation playwrights has left the footprints of negative images for women and, consequently, the condition of women in society at large (258).

Thus, in various works of literature and art, beautiful and captivating women are regarded as cunning and vicious to the men in relationships with them but very few studies have attempted to look at it from this perspective that it is a patriarchal construction about whom the femme fatales are. This study, therefore, argues that the femme fatale label is a gender stereotype that does not reckon with the participation of the male in his tragedy. It is a patriarchal stereotyped narrative that excludes the men from blame and collaboration. Charles Nnolim argues that the debasement of the female image is as old as the Bible and the Koran, and has other origins in pre-historic literature and mythology (123). It validates the fact that patriarchy singles out women for special vilification. He also asserts that from Edenic myth to modern times, beautiful women have been depicted as angels with feet of clay and as purveyors of unhappiness both for themselves and for their male counterparts (169).

Yeseibo, Furman and Nnolim's views align with this study's argument on femme fatale narrative as being controlled by men for thousands of years, and they also provide the basis for the narrative as illustrated in the play under study. Nawal El Sadaawi, corroborating Nnolim's view, provides a more illuminating debased image and representation of the woman in phallogentric texts as a capricious vamp, a playful and beautiful slave, a she-devil imbued with cunning and capable of a thousand artifices, an explosive danger versed in all the arts of deceit and conspiracy, a seductive mistress captivating in her passion (521). She is as positive and dynamic as Satan and his evil spirits, wherever matters of sex and love are concerned. Woman in all the aspects of the role she is made to play, whether it is that of a queen or a slave bought from the market, remains a slave (Sadaawi 521).

Sadaawi's argument coheres with Zaki Mobarak's that "women have a greater power to destroy men than Satan and all his devils together" (522). It is my contention that the negative representations and interpretations of women as femme fatales are reductive, depreciatory and contemptible. Essentially, these scholars turn the discourse of femme fatale into a narrative that excludes anything that threatens patriarchy and its values. It also points to the fact that the catalogues of the distorted images of women consistently and systematically portrayed in literary texts is a reinforcement of the dominant ideology of patriarchy that assigns negative roles to women because of their gender. Consequently, the concept of femme fatale is not properly situated in human existence. It sits tangentially against the women because scholars focused mainly on the supposedly destructive beauty of alluring women while neglecting other factors which activate the seemingly destructive nature of femme fatale. It thus aligns with Nnolim's assertion that, the image of women in both Western and African literature is a gloomy one, compounded by the unhelpful hand of tradition and patriarchy (165).

Synopsis of *A Dance of the Forests*

Though Wole Soyinka's play, *A Dance of the Forests*, is known for its exploration of intricate issues such as history, identity and destiny, yet it is interlaced with human experiences and actions together with uncanny influences. The appearance of a femme fatale figure in the play, typified by the character of Rola, also known as Madame Tortoise is one of the main subjects in the play. In *A Dance of the Forests*, Madame Tortoise in the court of Mata Kharibu eight centuries ago is a historical prototype of Rola. She is also regarded as a femme fatale whose irresistible feminine charms intoxicate

her lovers/partners and leads to their destruction. The play, which deals with both the present and past lives of the characters, presents Rola as a dangerous/deadly woman in the human community. She is labelled a femme fatale, a whore, a seductress, and an evil and destructive woman unfit to be the queen of Mata Kharibu's empire. In fact, in the present, she is depicted as a courtesan and in the past, she is depicted as Madame Tortoise-the queen in Mata Kharibu's court known as a notorious whore. Rola is portrayed as a wicked seductress, a whore, a woman whose destructive beauty causes her path to be littered with dead lovers she callously sends to their early graves. Rola is also regarded as a dreadful woman in both past and present existences because two of her lovers died in their quest to possess her beauty and love (22). She is said to have abandoned her husband for Mata Kharibu, and akin to Helen of Troy, a war was fought over her.

Show me a man not overcome with passion for a beautiful
woman. Her boldness is so reckless that she shows her love
for a man's friend even before his face; she knows no pity
in her passion, and always defends herself by attacking her
accuser. But she is cunning in love's ways... A man in love
with a beautiful woman, is lost in desire of the wanton-this
is the tragedy of a man's life (Frank Harris 322).

The excerpt above attests to the fact that human beings always want to possess beautiful things and this objectifies women. However, just as men desire beautiful women and yearn for pleasure and gratification against all odds, women also break boundaries to gratify their desperate inner cravings for the men they love. This is seen in the relationship between the male and female characters in the selected text. The implication is that though patriarchal constructions of femme fatale project beautiful and captivating women as the purveyors of the tragic fate of men, yet other factors like tragic flaw, inordinate desire, ambition, personal choice, ignorance, overwhelming influence and impetuosity are all involved in the tragic consequences of femme fatale as reflected in the literary text under investigation. For instance, in the play, *A Dance of the Forests*, though Rola/Madame Tortoise's beauty is described as frighteningly beautiful and irresistible, despite her loveliness, the tragedy will not have occurred if the central male character, Mata Kharibu, and others did not make the choices of bringing her into their lives because of her alluring beauty.

In his resolve to fight a war because of a woman despite warnings, Mata Kharibu tells the Soothsayer, "If you come to tell me of unfavourable stars / Soothsayer, turn round and go out again. We will fight this / War in spite of cowards and auguries" (58). This study argues that Mata Kharibu's irrational actions is a vivid reflection of blind passion that mutes the voice of reason and leads to his defeat and tragedy, including other male characters in the play. They allow their emotions to gain sway over their reason and this leads to their bad decisions and personal choices that become detrimental to them. Their pursuit of beauty and love and their yearning for pleasure and the gratification of their hearts' desires is, perhaps, one of the typical tragedies of life, a symbol for ever. Thus, a man, despite his genius, suffers also through his own excesses and tragic flaw, and bound to the stake of his own

passionate sensibilities and consumed, as with fire. In other words, the male characters' inordinate desires, ambition, ignorance, personal choices, overwhelming influence and impetuosity, rather than the destructive beauty of their women lead to their tragedy.

In the play, Warrior talks about the war Mata Kharibu wants them to fight because of his inordinate desire, ambition and the overwhelming influence of his love for Madame Tortoise' beauty as an unjust war. He tells the Physician, "It is an unjust war. I cannot lead my men into battle / merely to recover the trousseau of any woman... / But Mata Kharibu is so bent on bloodshed that... / Is this the action of a ruler who values the peace of his subjects?" (54). Mata Kharibu wants to possess Rola's beauty and in some ways, conquer it. So, he says, "I will be satisfied with much blood. Does it not mean a great battle? On Kharibu's side at least, there will be real soldiers fighting" (58). Significantly, though the beauty of the central female characters is a veritable source of destruction, yet it is not altogether the cause of the tragedy of their lovers or partners. Rola's men are tragic characters whose qualities of destruction residing in their tragic nature motivate their actions and personal choices as reflected in the play under study.

In the same vein, Madame Tortoise's desperation to have Warrior is evident in her illogical actions and personal choices. She feels slighted by Warrior's blunt refusal to do her bidding. So, she furiously tells him, "What are you? Men have killed for me. / Men have died for me. Have you flints in your eye? Fool, / Have you ever lived?... /I, Madame Tortoise, spurned / by a common soldier. For that! Was it for that?" (64–65). Quite obviously, Mata Kharibu, Rola, and other characters in the play are all motivated, even driven by desires, fears, needs, and conflicts of which they are unaware. They all engage even in self-destructive actions just to have what they want and this leads to their eventual tragedy. For instance, in the play, the soothsayer is not comfortable with Mata Kharibu's unreasonable decision to send his soldiers to war. Therefore, he asks him why he wants to proceed despite the unfavourable stars. Nevertheless, the powerful and overwhelming influence of the unconscious on human behaviour, is glaringly at work in the central characters in the text.

Thus, rather than heed to the soothsayer's advice, Mata Kharibu tells him, "It is too late to stop. I have been frightened. / I dare not stop. I cannot stop. That captain of my army has / put a curse on me.... / Why should my slave, my subject, my mere human property / say, unless he is mad, I shall not fight this war. Is he a freak?" (60). Essentially, it is the unconscious desires of the id for pleasure and gratification that motivate all the characters in the play to be involved in unjustifiable and ruinous actions to satisfy their desires without considering the consequences. Thus, the id, which reveals the selfish nature of human beings aimed at satisfying the instincts at all costs is made manifest in all the characters under study as they are cut off from the external world (reality) and plunged in their own world of perception to obey the inexorable pleasure principle.

Most often, a man's heart desires a beautiful woman and yearns for satisfaction against all odds, and then, in his quest for pleasure and inordinate desire for satisfaction at the hands of a beautiful woman, a man gets trapped in his own passions as vividly portrayed in the text under investigation. Even Warrior finds it very difficult to come to terms with Mata Kharibu's impetuous actions and illogical decisions because of a woman's beauty and love. Thus, he boldly tells the Physician, "You have done your work. You may tell the king / That I was mad before, but now I am fully returned to my senses / Go to the woman who draws / the frown on his face and greases the thunder of his voice... / I will not fight her war" (55).

Warrior's disappointment and disapproval of Mata Kharibu's behaviour reverberates the study's stance that, though the captivating and irresistible beauty of a woman associates her with destructive tendencies, yet she cannot solely be the carrier of the fatality without the contributing actions and personal choices of the men who are involved in relationships with her and are usually termed victims. Thus, it will be a disservice to the womenfolk to solely place such disastrous consequences on them because every man has a role to play in whatever choices he makes.

In *A Dance of the Forests*, a play which deals with both the present and past lives of the characters, Rola is regarded as a dangerous/deadly woman in the human community. She is labelled a femme fatale, a whore, a seductress, and an evil and destructive woman unfit to be the queen of Mata Kharibu's empire. In fact, in the present, she is depicted as a courtesan and in the past, she is depicted as Madame Tortoise—the queen in Mata Kharibu's court known as a notorious whore. Rola is portrayed as a wicked seductress, a whore, a woman whose destructive beauty causes her path to be littered with dead lovers she callously sends to their early graves. She is also regarded as a dreadful woman in both past and present existences because some of her lovers died in their quest, inordinate desires and personal choices to possess her love and beauty (22).

Essentially, though an alluring woman is a passive agent of tragedy and her beauty a catalyst for destruction, she is not entirely to blame for the tragedy of the men who are involved in relationships with her. Beautiful and attractive women occupy a central position in the tragedy of men, obviously by their captivating beauty which intoxicates their lovers or partners as reflected in the life of the major female character, Rola/Madame Tortoise. Nevertheless, it is the tragic flaw, inordinate desires, ambition, overwhelming influence and ignorance of the male and female characters in the play that bring about violence, hasty actions, poor decisions and personal choices that culminate into tragedy and death. The tragedy of the characters under study, is a pointer to the fact that man often acts against his better judgment, and follows the call of his instincts and passion against the dictates of his reason, thereby 'abandoning the dignity of his proper nature' and behaving like a beast (Muhammad Badawi 57). For instance, in the play, *A Dance of the Forests*, Mata Kharibu's burning and inordinate desire for pleasure and satisfaction manifests in his overwhelming love for Rola/Madame Tortoise, his irrational decisions, violent actions and personal choices.

Interestingly, the personality of the major male and female characters in the text is brought to the fore through the interplay of the Psychoanalytic concepts of the id and the unconscious, as well as inordinate desire, ambition, tragic flaw, overwhelming influence and ignorance. These all manifest in the characters' dialogue, impetuous actions and personal choices which eventually lead to the tragic consequences of femme fatale as reflected in the literary text under investigation. Moreover, when people are overwhelmed by their burning desires for pleasure and gratification, they become trapped in their own passions and utterly powerless to make the right decisions as reflected in the lives of Mata Kharibu and Rola/Madame Tortoise. For instance, for the sake of a beautiful woman, Rola/Madame Tortoise, Mata Kharibu sends his subjects to fight meaningless wars that send them to early graves.

This is akin to King David of the Hebrew tradition, who, for the sake of a beautiful woman, Bathsheba (Uriah's wife), sends Uriah and other servants of his to battle and in the end, they are killed (II Samuel Chapter 11: 1–27). Consequently, the id at work in the characters' lives is regarded as the impetuous, unconscious part of the mind that has no understanding of any form of reality or consequence, for which cause it seeks for immediate gratification at all costs. Because it is always

trying to satisfy its hunger for pleasure, it operates without any thought of consequences, anxiety, ethics, logic, precaution, or morality (Ann Dobie 57). In their pursuit of love, beauty, pleasure and satisfaction, the characters in the play under consideration engage in many illogical and suicidal actions which eventually lead to their tragedy. Moreover, the powerful and overwhelming influence of the id and the unconscious, is evident in the characters' burning and inordinate desires for pleasure and satisfaction; this subjugates them and compels them to engage in seemingly preposterous and hazardous actions and personal choices which eventually lead to their tragedy.

It also lends credence to the fact that the id, which operates on the pleasure principle, and only takes into account what it wants while disregarding all consequences, is noticeable in the characters' inordinate desires, actions and personal choices for pleasure and gratification that lead to their catastrophic end. For example, patriarchal idiosyncrasies of male domination, power and freedom, reflect in Mata Kharibu's self-important overbearing attitude and confidence, pride and insensitivity which lead to his downfall. He brags before his subjects and says, "Not only he. Everyone who thinks like him, / be he soldier or merchant./ I will have no moral termites a thousand miles within my domain./ Mata Kharibu is not the idle eye that watches contemptible insects /eat away the strength of his kingdom (58).

The unconscious, which has a very powerful and overwhelming influence on the characters' behaviour is made manifest even in their language use and as Raman Selden asserts, reason has never had things all its own way because pleasure and desire continue to disrupt the clear lines of rationality (223) as reflected in all the characters in the text. In fact, the id plays out in all of them as they display their behavioural difficulties such as impetuosity, hate, overwhelming love, rashness, passion, rebellion, disobedience, naivety, and docility which manifest in their perplexities which also precipitate the agony and terrible ordeal they undergo. Additionally, it is the unconscious desires of the id for pleasure and satisfaction that motivate the desperate and violent cravings of the characters for gratification without an eye to consequences, and of course, it precipitates their violent and tragic ends as vividly portrayed in the selected play. The unconscious is therefore revealed as having a very powerful and overwhelming influence on the behaviour, actions and personal choices of the characters in the play under study.

Moreover, Madame Tortoise in the court of Mata Kharibu eight centuries ago is a historical prototype of Rola. She is also regarded as a femme fatale whose irresistible feminine charms, intoxicate her lovers/pursuers and lead to their destruction. Obaneji tells Rola, "I don't think that would be any better than here. /Isn't the graveyard filled with your lovers?... / Well, look at her. / Doesn't she look the type who would /drive men to madness and self-destruction! (21). Adenebi also talks about the assumed seductive and destructive nature of Rola's beauty when he says, "Nothing? Do you call that nothing? / Two lovers in the graveyard./ And the sordidness of it./ The whole horrible scandal /How did I ever get in your company?" (22). Adenebi further refers to Rola/Madame Tortoise as the woman who drains the life from men, slowly or in violence (42). Though a product of a patriarchal society, she is said to have abandoned her husband for Mata Kharibu, and akin to Helen of Troy, a war was fought over her. Hear Sylvia Bryan's observation about Rola, "Madame Tortoise/Rola, has a similarly destructive effect on men; / a personification of sex urge, /she drives men to desperation by intoxicating them / with irrepressible desire for her" (124).

Bryan's position corroborates the play's depiction of Rola as a woman whose feminine charms and beauty bring destruction to countless men as seen in the dialogue between Adenebi and her (23-24). However, the male characters' ambition, ignorance, tragic flaws, inordinate desires, personal choices, overwhelming influence and impetuosity, borne out of their tragic nature, all enhance the formation of femme fatale tragedy as reflected in the plays. When Adenebi accuses Rola of also destroying young men, she replies, "I regret nothing. You men are conceited fools. / Nothing was ever done on my account. Nothing./ What you do is boost yourselves all the time. By every action./ When that one killed the other, was it on my account?/ When he killed himself, could he claim that he did it for me?/ He was only big with himself, so leave me out of it (24). It is noteworthy that though Rola's beauty is described as charming and irresistible, as events keep unfolding in the play, Warrior, a subordinate of Mata Kharibu is seen not only rejecting Madame Tortoise's advances and promises, but also refusing to be seduced by her alluring beauty.

Warrior's encounter with Rola/Madame Tortoise aligns with this study's argument that though wild and powerful like the forces of nature, a woman's beauty cannot be destructive without the contributing actions and personal choices of some men for pleasure and satisfaction. Rola/Madame Tortoise is also regarded as a dreadful woman in both past and present existences because two of her lovers died in their quest to possess her love (22). However, when Obaneji tells her that "the graveyards are filled with her lovers," and that "she looks like the type who would drive men to madness and self-destruction" (21), her response is that the men begged that their lives be wrung out of them, and that their heads be turned inside out (23). Also, when Adenebi accuses her of ruining countless men, both young and old, she tells him that the men are investors who choose to invest foolishly (24). Thus, to Rola, her relationship with the men who eventually get destroyed on account of her beauty is purely business. Consequently, she is not to be held responsible for their tragedy as even their extravagant spending on her is an investment.

Mata Kharibu insists on going to battle without considering the peace of his people and the entire kingdom. Warrior, while talking about how Mata Kharibu's inordinate desire for Rola/Madame Tortoise' beauty and love motivate his bad decisions and personal choice for war, he also tells the physician, "Mata Kharibu is leader, not merely of soldiers but of men./ Let him turn the unnatural pattern of men/ always eating up one another. /I am suddenly weary of this soldiering where men/ must find new squabbles for their cruelty./ Must I tell the widowed that their men died for another's trousseau?" (56). It is worthy of note that the id is only concerned about its own satisfaction, and this accounts for why it does not care about reality, consequences, or even the needs of others. Consequently, when the id wants something, it gives no consideration to other things as nothing else becomes important to it.

This is evident in the characters' overwhelming desire for pleasure and gratification against all odds. It can even be self-destructive in its drive to have what it wants (Dobie 57). Certainly, the id appears in that form in the major characters under study. Thus, in their quest to satisfy their inordinate desires for beauty/handsomeness and love, they get trapped in their own passions through their impetuous actions and personal choices. In fact, the tragedy of the major characters in pursuit of beauty/handsomeness and love is strange and terrible, and their actions defy rational understanding (Richard Gill 228) as vividly portrayed in the selected play.

Thus, the selected concepts in Freud's Psychoanalytic theory are used to explore in detail the depths of the major characters' motivation and conflicts in the selected play and also tracing the intricate, mysterious operations of their minds. In addition, the inner passion driving the major male and female characters under study, find expression in their personal choices and impetuous actions which, in turn, lead to their destruction. It therefore becomes apparent that, the Psychoanalytic concepts of the id and the unconscious, offer great insights into the major characters' lives and the conflict of opposing forces within them; in fact, they dig up the unexcavated monuments of the characters' minds. In other words, the interplay of these concepts, being the inner forces which influence the complex behaviour and irrational decisions of these characters, provide great and fascinating insights into the complexity of people's emotional lives and the motives which inform their actions and personal choices as reflected in the selected play.

Conclusion

Undoubtedly, femme fatale has elicited a lot of critical comments from several significant scholars, who have examined the concept from different perspectives. The various criticisms implicitly reveal the different representations and interpretations of femme fatale in both Western and African societies as reflected in the selected play. Interestingly, even though the critical works reviewed all articulate and underpin the structures upon which this study stands, that other than the inherent flaw located in the tendency of some females to bear on males, there are other factors such as tragic flaw, inordinate desire, ambition, personal choice, overwhelming influence, ignorance and impetuosity on the part of the male gender which enhance femme fatale tragedy but are never considered when the fatality of the entrancingly beautiful woman is discussed. This study, therefore, demonstrates the complexity of femme fatale as it explores her beyond mere destructive tendencies usually associated with her to equally consider the contributing actions of the men, who usually are termed victims of femme fatale. The major point is that all human beings are products of the choices they make and victims of femme fatale are also products of the choices they make.

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Voix Réduites au Silence: Une Exploration de la Marginalisation des Femmes dans la Politique Nigériane À Travers le Prisme de « Purple Hibiscus » de Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

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Résumé

Cet article mène une analyse critique du roman « Purple Hibiscus » de Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie pour explorer la marginalisation des femmes dans la politique nigériane. À travers une perspective féministe, l'article examine comment les thèmes et les personnages du roman reflètent la dynamique de genre qui perpétue l'exclusion des femmes des processus de prise de décision politique au Nigeria. Il soutient que le roman met en lumière la manière dont les normes patriarcales, les préjugés culturels et les pratiques discriminatoires font taire la voix des femmes et limitent leur participation politique. Le personnage de Béatrice, une épouse timide et soumise, illustre les attentes sociétales placées sur les femmes, tandis que les difficultés de Kambili à trouver sa voix reflètent les défis auxquels les femmes sont confrontées pour affirmer leur action politique. Il explore également la façon dont le roman critique les normes culturelles et religieuses qui perpétuent l'inégalité entre les sexes, y compris l'attente de soumission des femmes et la restriction de leur autonomie. En outre, l'article examine comment le roman met en évidence l'impact du colonialisme et du néolibéralisme sur la marginalisation politique des femmes au Nigeria. L'article conclut en soulignant la nécessité d'un paysage politique plus inclusif qui valorise les perspectives des femmes et promeut l'égalité des sexes. En explorant les intersections de la littérature et de la politique, cet article offre une perspective unique sur la marginalisation des femmes dans la politique nigériane et propose des pistes pour promouvoir l'inclusion du genre dans les processus de prise de décision politique.

Mots clés : marginalisation, femmes, politique nigériane, « Purple Hibiscus », Chimamanda.

Abstract

This article conducts a critical analysis of the novel “Purple Hibiscus” by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie to explore the marginalization of women in Nigerian politics. Through a feminist perspective, the article examines how the novel's themes and characters reflect the gender dynamics that perpetuate the exclusion of women from political decision-making processes in Nigeria.

This work examine how the novel highlights the ways in which patriarchal norms, cultural biases, and discriminatory practices silence women's voices and limit their political participation. The character of Beatrice, a shy and submissive wife, illustrates the societal expectations placed on women, while Kambili's difficulties in finding her voice reflect the challenges women face in asserting their political agency.

It also explores how the novel critiques cultural and religious norms that perpetuate gender inequality, including the expectation of submission from women and the restriction of their autonomy. Furthermore, the article examines how the novel highlights the impact of colonialism and neoliberalism on the political marginalization of women in Nigeria.

The article concludes by highlighting the need for a more inclusive political landscape that values women's perspectives and promotes gender equality. By exploring the intersections of literature and politics, this article offers a unique perspective on the marginalization of women in Nigerian politics and suggests avenues for promoting gender inclusion in political decision-making processes.

Keywords: marginalization, women, Nigerian politics, “Purple Hibiscus”, Chimamanda.

Introduction

La marginalisation des femmes dans la politique nigériane est un problème omniprésent qui s'est perpétué par divers facteurs, notamment les normes culturelles et religieuses, l'exclusion historique et les pratiques discriminatoires. Le roman « Purple Hibiscus » de Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie propose une exploration puissante de cette question, donnant un aperçu de la manière dont les femmes sont réduites au silence, exclues et marginalisées dans la société nigériane.

L'une des principales façons dont les femmes sont marginalisées dans la politique nigériane est la perpétuation de stéréotypes sexistes néfastes. Le roman d'Adichie met en lumière la manière dont les femmes sont censées se conformer aux rôles de genre traditionnels, comme être soumises et attentionnées, et les conséquences auxquelles elles sont confrontées lorsqu'elles ne le font pas. Le personnage de Béatrice, par exemple, est puni pour son assurance et son indépendance, illustrant la manière dont les femmes sont disciplinées lorsqu'elles remettent en question les normes de genre.

Une autre manière dont les femmes sont marginalisées dans la politique nigériane est leur exclusion des processus de prise de décision. Le roman d'Adichie montre comment les hommes détiennent le pouvoir et prennent les décisions, tandis que les femmes sont reléguées à l'écart. Le personnage d'Eugène, par exemple, prend des décisions pour sa famille sans consulter sa femme, illustrant la manière dont les femmes se voient refuser l'action et l'autonomie.

Le roman souligne également l'impact de l'exclusion historique sur la marginalisation des femmes dans la politique nigériane. Le personnage de Tante Ifeoma, par exemple, est celui d'une femme instruite et

indépendante qui est exclue des processus de prise de décision politique en raison de son sexe. Cette exclusion est le résultat de pratiques historiques qui ont refusé aux femmes l'accès à l'éducation, à l'autonomisation économique et au pouvoir politique.

Enfin, le roman d'Adichie illustre la manière dont les pratiques discriminatoires perpétuent la marginalisation des femmes dans la politique nigériane. Le personnage de Kambili, par exemple, est confronté à la discrimination et au harcèlement en raison de son sexe et de sa classe sociale. Cette discrimination est perpétuée par divers facteurs, notamment les normes culturelles et religieuses, et contribue à marginaliser davantage les femmes dans la société nigériane. « Purple Hibiscus » propose une exploration puissante de la marginalisation des femmes dans la politique nigériane. À travers sa description des stéréotypes de genre néfastes, de l'exclusion des processus décisionnels, de l'exclusion historique et des pratiques discriminatoires, le roman met en lumière la manière dont les femmes sont réduites au silence, exclues et marginalisées dans la société nigériane. En tant que tel, il constitue un appel à l'action, nous exhortant à remettre en question ces pratiques et à œuvrer pour une société plus inclusive et plus équitable.

Méthodologie

Cet article utilise une approche qualitative, combinant analyse littéraire et théorie féministe pour explorer la marginalisation des femmes dans la politique nigériane à travers le roman « Purple Hibiscus » de Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie.

1. Revue de la littérature : Examen de la littérature existante sur le genre et la politique au Nigeria et sur la théorie littéraire féministe.
2. Analyse textuelle : réalisation d'une lecture approfondie de « Purple Hibiscus », en analysant les thèmes, les personnages et le langage liés au genre et à la politique.
3. Analyse littéraire féministe : application de la théorie littéraire féministe à l'analyse textuelle, en examinant comment le roman reflète et remet en question les normes patriarcales et les stéréotypes de genre.
4. Contextualisation : Recherche sur le contexte historique et culturel du roman et sa pertinence pour la politique nigériane.

Cette méthodologie fournit une base solide pour explorer la marginalisation des femmes dans la politique nigériane à travers le prisme de « Purple Hibiscus », offrant un aperçu de la dynamique de genre et des structures de pouvoir qui façonnent les expériences des femmes au Nigeria.

Revue de la Littérature et Cadre Théorique

L'intersection du genre et de la politique au Nigeria a été largement explorée dans divers travaux universitaires. Okello (2018) examine la dynamique de genre dans la politique nigériane, en soulignant les barrières culturelles et religieuses qui entravent la participation politique des femmes. De même, Adedeji (2017) étudie l'impact du genre sur la prise de décision politique au Nigeria, révélant les préjugés sexistes qui perpétuent l'exclusion des femmes.

La théorie littéraire féministe a également été appliquée à la littérature nigériane pour explorer le genre et la politique. Ogundipe-Leslie (1994) utilise la théorie féministe pour analyser les œuvres d'écrivaines nigérianes, notamment Buchi Emecheta et Zulu Sofola. Son travail révèle la manière dont la littérature reflète et remet en question les normes patriarcales de la société nigériane.

Des études plus récentes se sont concentrées sur la représentation des femmes dans la politique nigériane dans la littérature. Uwakweh (2015) examine la représentation des femmes politiques dans la littérature nigériane, soulignant la manière dont elles sont souvent marginalisées et stéréotypées. Ejiofor (2018) explore la représentation du genre et de la politique dans les œuvres de Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, dont « Purple Hibiscus ».

Ces études démontrent l'importance du genre et de la politique dans la littérature nigériane et la nécessité d'une exploration plus approfondie. Cet article s'appuie sur cette littérature existante en fournissant une analyse détaillée du « Purple Hibiscus » et de sa représentation de la marginalisation des femmes dans la politique nigériane.

Cadre Theorique

Il est nécessaire d'utiliser une théorie pour approfondir la compréhension du sujet. Les théories sont les lentilles par lesquelles l'étude explique les concepts afin que la compréhension du concept soit à portée de main. Les théories évoquées dans cette étude ont un impact significatif sur la compréhension de l'étude.

● Theorie Feministe Africaine

Selon (Archer, 2009), il existe différentes théories féministes, différentes perspectives et définitions féministes. Certains universitaires africains comme Nkomo et Ngambi ont suggéré d'utiliser la théorie de la version africaine comme cadre théorique pour faciliter le sujet des femmes africaines occupant des postes de direction insolubles. Ils ont fait valoir que davantage de recherches sont nécessaires pour comprendre les expériences et les statuts des femmes africaines en ce qui concerne les postes de direction Nkomo et Ngambi (2009). Comme cette recherche est basée sur l'étude du genre dans la société nigériane, discuter de la théorie féministe africaine est fondamental, pour mieux comprendre les réalités de la culture, des traditions et des croyances africaines.

Okafor & Akokuwebe (2015), affirment que les pratiques traditionnelles et culturelles perçoivent et traitent les femmes comme étant inférieures aux hommes, ce qui entraîne l'assujettissement des femmes, tout en permettant aux hommes de continuer à dominer les femmes dans les domaines politique, économique, social et religieux.

Des recherches en Géorgie affirment que les valeurs traditionnelles sont l'un des facteurs qui empêchent les femmes de participer à la vie politique, étant donné que les femmes ont les plus grandes responsabilités dans les travaux domestiques, certains rôles culturels et stéréotypés ont été attribués aux femmes dans la société (Nodia & Scholtbach, 2006, cité dans Blomgren 2010, p.6). L'assujettissement des femmes a été pratiqué dès la période coloniale, en général, leur participation et leur représentation politique au Nigeria ont une très longue histoire de marginalisation et de domination

par les hommes. Peut-être que l'homme a toujours été caractérisé par la discrimination : discrimination raciale, de classe et bien sûr, de genre ou de sexe depuis l'Antiquité (Abubakar & Ahmed, 2014).

Par conséquent, la majorité des travaux de recherche écrits sur la contribution des femmes nigérianes à la participation politique et à la prise de décision montrent que les femmes sont mal représentées en politique, et les travaux de recherche existants révèlent également que les facteurs qui empêchent ces femmes d'assumer des postes de direction sont centrés sur l'inégalité entre les sexes, la culture, l'oppression des femmes, le patriarcat et la religion. En d'autres termes, la plupart de ces travaux existants visent à identifier les principaux problèmes qui empêchent les femmes d'avoir des droits et d'accéder à des postes politiques comme leurs homologues masculins au Nigeria.

1. Analyse Littéraire Féministe

« Purple Hibiscus » de Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie est une exploration puissante du genre, du pouvoir et de l'identité au Nigeria, offrant une critique nuancée des normes patriarcales et des stéréotypes de genre. À travers une analyse littéraire féministe, cet essai examine comment le roman reflète et remet en question ces structures dominantes, soulignant les façons dont la littérature peut être utilisée pour subvertir et transformer les normes sociétales.

Normes patriarcales:

- Le roman dépeint une société patriarcale où les hommes détiennent le pouvoir et où les femmes sont censées être soumises, reflétant le contexte culturel et historique du Nigeria.
- Le personnage d'Eugene Achike incarne les normes masculines traditionnelles, illustrant la manière dont le patriarcat est intériorisé et perpétué.
- Le roman met en lumière les limites imposées à l'action et à l'autonomie des femmes, comme le montrent la vie contrainte de Béatrice et les luttes de Kambili pour s'exprimer.

Défis aux normes patriarcales :

- Auntie Ifeoma remet en question les rôles de genre traditionnels, offrant un modèle alternatif de féminité forte, indépendante et autonome.
- Le roman critique les pratiques religieuses et culturelles qui perpétuent l'oppression sexiste, comme l'utilisation de textes religieux pour justifier la violence domestique.
- Le parcours de Kambili représente les possibilités d'autonomisation des femmes et les défis liés à la navigation dans les structures patriarcales au Nigeria.
- Stéréotypes de genre:
- Le roman représente les femmes comme des femmes nourricières et soumises, renforçant les rôles de genre traditionnels. Cependant, il remet également en question ces stéréotypes à travers

des personnages comme Tante Ifeoma et Kambili, qui incarnent des formes alternatives de féminité.

- Le texte présente les hommes comme dominants et autoritaires, mais critique également ces normes à travers le personnage d'Eugène, qui se révèle imparfait et vulnérable.

« Purple Hibiscus » est un texte féministe puissant qui remet en question les normes patriarcales et les stéréotypes de genre au Nigeria. À travers sa représentation du genre, du pouvoir et de l'identité, le roman offre un aperçu des expériences des femmes dans une société patriarcale et des possibilités de résistance et d'autonomisation. Cette analyse littéraire féministe souligne l'importance de prendre en compte le genre et le pouvoir dans l'analyse littéraire et la manière dont la littérature peut être utilisée pour défier et renverser les normes dominantes au Nigeria.

2. Analyse Textuelle

« Purple Hibiscus » de Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie est un roman riche et complexe qui offre un aperçu des expériences des femmes au Nigeria. Cette analyse textuelle examinera les thèmes, les personnages et le langage liés au genre et à la politique dans le roman, soulignant la manière dont Adichie critique les normes patriarcales et remet en question les discours dominants.

Thèmes:

- Rôles et attentes de genre
- Oppression politique et résistance
- Influences culturelles et religieuses sur le genre et la politique
- La lutte pour l'autonomisation et l'action des femmes

Personnages:

- Kambili : Le protagoniste, dont le parcours illustre les défis liés à la gestion des attentes politiques et de genre au Nigeria.
- Béatrice : la mère de Kambili, dont le personnage représente les contraintes imposées aux femmes dans les sociétés patriarcales.
- Eugène : le père de Kambili, dont le personnage incarne les normes masculines traditionnelles et l'ambition politique.
- Auntie Ifeoma : Une femme forte et indépendante qui remet en question les rôles de genre traditionnels et propose un modèle alternatif de féminité.

Langue:

- Imagerie et symbolisme : La fleur d'hibiscus violette représente le potentiel de changement et de croissance.

- Dialogue : révèle les dynamiques de pouvoir et les stéréotypes de genre, ainsi que les défis posés à ces normes.
- Structure narrative : non linéaire, reflétant la nature fragmentée des expériences de Kambili et la complexité des questions de genre et politiques au Nigeria.

Cette analyse textuelle révèle la manière dont « Purple Hibiscus » propose une critique nuancée des normes patriarcales et des discours dominants au Nigeria. À travers sa représentation du genre, du pouvoir et de la politique, le roman met en lumière les défis auxquels sont confrontées les femmes dans une société patriarcale et les possibilités de résistance et d'autonomisation.

3. Contextualisation

"Purple Hibiscus" de Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie se déroule au Nigeria après la guerre du Biafra et explore les complexités d'une nation aux prises avec des troubles politiques, des tensions ethniques et des influences religieuses. Voici une contextualisation détaillée du roman.

Contexte historique:

- Le Nigeria a obtenu son indépendance de la domination coloniale britannique en 1960, mais le pays a été aux prises avec une instabilité politique et des tensions ethniques.
- La guerre du Biafra (1967-1970) a entraîné la sécession de la région du sud-est, dominée par les Igbo, entraînant des violences et des déplacements généralisés.
- Les conséquences de la guerre ont été marquées par des troubles politiques persistants, notamment un régime militaire et des luttes démocratiques.

Contexte culturel

- Le Nigeria est une nation multiethnique avec des pratiques et traditions culturelles diverses. Le roman met en évidence les tensions entre les groupes ethniques Igbo, Haoussa/Fulani et Yoruba.
- L'influence du colonialisme et du christianisme est évidente dans le roman, alors que les personnages naviguent entre les croyances traditionnelles et les valeurs occidentales.
- Le roman explore le rôle de la religion dans la formation des attitudes politiques et sociales, en particulier les tensions entre le christianisme et l'islam.

Pertinence pour la politique nigériane :

- Le roman critique l'autoritarisme et les normes patriarcales qui ont caractérisé la politique nigériane, illustrée par le personnage d'Eugene Achike.
- Le texte met en lumière les luttes pour la démocratie et la liberté politique au Nigeria, reflétées dans les expériences des personnages et dans la tourmente politique de l'époque.
- Le roman explore l'impact de l'instabilité politique sur les individus et les familles, démontrant le coût humain des troubles politiques.

Cette contextualisation met en évidence l'importance historique et culturelle de « Purple Hibiscus », démontrant comment le roman reflète et remet en question les complexités de la politique et de la société nigériane.

4. Les Causes de la Marginalisation des Femmes en Politique Nigériane

Voici quelques-uns des facteurs identifiés dans le roman empêchant la participation effective des femmes à la politique.

- **Privation d'éducation Formelle**

L'éducation est fondamentale dans le développement de toute nation, en particulier dans un pays en développement comme le Nigeria. En d'autres termes, l'éducation et le développement économique sont étroitement liés, de sorte que la croissance d'une nation dépend relativement du niveau d'éducation de ses citoyens. Selon Waylen, une importante population de la plupart des pays en développement est analphabète, par conséquent, il existe un lien étroit entre l'analphabétisme et le faible niveau de participation des femmes à la politique, compte tenu du fait qu'un minimum requis d'alphabétisation (certificat) est nécessaire dans d'autres pour être nommé ou concourir pour n'importe quel poste politique, et cette procédure disqualifie automatiquement la plupart des femmes de participer (Waylen, 1996).

Dans la société nigériane, la plupart des familles préfèrent former le garçon pour qu'il acquière une éducation formelle plutôt que la fille. Ces familles supposent généralement qu'éduquer une enfant de sexe féminin est un gaspillage de ressources car elles se marieront à long terme et seront intégrées dans une autre famille, ce qui a entraîné un pourcentage élevé de femmes non éduquées et timides qui ignorent leurs droits civiques, ce qui rend difficile de s'intéresser à la politique car ils croient que c'est pour les hommes. Bien qu'il soit vrai que de nombreux efforts et une prise de conscience aient été faits au fil des ans en ce qui concerne l'autonomisation des filles en matière d'éducation, il existe encore de nombreuses femmes qui souhaitent acquérir une éducation formelle mais qui ont été refusées en raison de contraintes financières dans la plupart des familles.

- **Facteur Socioculturel**

Les pratiques culturelles au Nigéria sont indirectement devenues un obstacle à la participation effective des femmes à la politique. La culture pourrait être définie comme une croyance, une tradition, des idées, des valeurs collectives partagées par un groupe social ou une population particulière. Par conséquent, la culture en tant que pratique a une forte influence sur les croyances des gens, leur perception de la vie, leurs identités et leur comportement Iwobi (2008). Le système culturel nigérian est fortement enraciné dans le patriarcat. Ces pratiques ont dans une mesure raisonnable privé la femme de son droit humain fondamental, la marginalisation des femmes dans l'espace politique nigérian est liée au système de croyances culturelles qui conditionne physiquement et psychologiquement les femmes à ne pas rivaliser avec leurs homologues masculins.

- **Facteur Ethnique**

Comme mentionné précédemment dans l'étude, le Nigéria en tant que nation est composé de divers groupes ethniques et est considéré comme l'une des nations les plus ethniquement complexes d'Afrique. La division ethnique de la politique nigériane contribue aux facteurs qui entravent la participation des femmes, car la plupart des gens rejoignent un parti politique ou votent pour un candidat en fonction de leur appartenance ethnique. Par exemple, les femmes qui épousent des hommes de groupes ethniques différents sont susceptibles de subir une discrimination systématique dans leur propre groupe ethnique. En d'autres termes, il devient très difficile pour eux de participer activement à la politique et à la société en général.

- **Patriarcat**

Le Nigérien en tant que nation applique un système patriarcal fort, qui est considéré comme l'un des principaux facteurs qui limitent la participation effective des femmes à la politique. La société patriarcale me perçoit et me traite comme des êtres supérieurs alors que les femmes sont considérées comme des subordonnées, cela donne aux hommes un sentiment de supériorité sur les femmes, ce qui rend difficile pour les femmes d'être facilement acceptées dans une institution de domination masculine comme la politique. Certains chercheurs comme Iwobi ont soutenu que la domination coloniale jouait un rôle majeur dans la facilitation et la promotion d'une société à dominance masculine contrairement à la précoloniale où les femmes nigérianes étaient autorisées à participer aux affaires politiques et sociales du pays sans être discriminées ou marginalisées par les hommes (Iwobi, 2008).

- **Facteur Financier**

La capacité financière est l'un des critères clés de la politique nigériane. Cependant, la plupart des femmes n'ont pas les ressources économiques nécessaires pour répondre aux normes financières élevées fixées par le système. Au fil des ans, la division entre les sexes et la discrimination sur le marché du travail nigérien ont également créé une inégalité économique, le marché du travail compte environ 75% de la main-d'œuvre fournie par les hommes. Cette disparité économique a permis aux hommes de posséder plus de pouvoir économique sur leurs homologues féminines, désavantageant ainsi la plupart des femmes sur le plan économique et incapables de résister aux exigences financières des campagnes politiques et autres postes de direction (Agbalajobi, 2010). Plus encore, le problème de l'incapacité financière a fait que la plupart des femmes dépendent de leur mari ou de leur père pour un soutien financier pendant leur parcours politique, ce qui rend difficile la réalisation ou la réalisation de leurs rêves politiques, car la valeur sociétale suppose que la participation et les activités politiques sont pour le Hommes.

5. Les Solutions de la Marginalisation des Femmes en Politique

Après avoir présenter des causes de la marginalisation des femmes dans la politique Nigériane. Du point de vue de Chimamanda dans son roman « Purple Hibiscus », il est nécessaire de proposer les solutions suivantes qui peuvent contribuer à réduire la marginalisation des femmes dans la politique nigériane.

Autonomiser les femmes avec des compétences Les femmes devraient être encouragées à acquérir diverses compétences. Ainsi, le gouvernement devrait accorder la priorité au développement des femmes en créant divers centres d'acquisition de compétences où ces compétences peuvent être enseignées, en particulier dans les zones rurales qui comptent une plus grande population de femmes sans instruction. Compte tenu des milieux ruraux, le gouvernement peut investir davantage dans les compétences liées à l'agriculture, car la plupart des femmes situées dans cette région sont activement impliquées dans l'agriculture. Par conséquent, les doter de compétences et d'outils agricoles modernes facilitera leurs moyens de subsistance et leur stabilité financière. Alors que les femmes des zones urbaines devraient être dotées de compétences qui pourraient leur être plus utiles en fonction de leurs exigences environnementales.

Autonomisation de l'éducation L'éducation est supposée être le fondement de la croissance et du développement ; par conséquent, ces mots sont entrelacés. En d'autres termes, l'éducation est fondamentale pour le progrès national, en particulier dans les pays en développement comme le Nigeria. Le gouvernement devrait donc créer davantage d'institutions et d'organisations pour éduquer et sensibiliser la société (les familles) sur l'importance et l'avantage de permettre à leurs filles d'être scolarisées. L'accès à une éducation adéquate pour la petite fille, est un rudiment de découverte et d'émancipation pour elle-même. Ainsi, l'autonomisation éducative propulsera, équipera et encouragera les femmes avec les informations nécessaires pour soutenir leurs ambitions politiques.

Autonomisation financière Dans la politique nigériane, la capacité financière est l'un des facteurs clés requis avant qu'un candidat puisse être pris au sérieux ou reconnu par les partis politiques ou la société dans son ensemble. Par conséquent, le gouvernement devrait créer davantage d'organisations et d'institutions qui aideront et formeront les femmes sur les rudiments du progrès économique. Par conséquent, l'indépendance financière des femmes contribuera énormément à la réalisation de leurs rêves politiques dans le système politique nigérian.

Conclusion

En conclusion, cet article a mené une analyse complète de « Purple Hibiscus » de Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, explorant ses thèmes, ses personnages et son langage à travers une analyse textuelle, une analyse littéraire féministe et une contextualisation. La représentation du genre, du pouvoir et de la politique au Nigeria dans le roman a été examinée, révélant la manière dont il remet en question les normes patriarcales et les discours dominants.

À travers sa critique des rôles de genre, de l'oppression politique et des influences culturelles et religieuses, « Purple Hibiscus » offre une puissante perspective féministe sur la société nigériane. L'exploration du roman sur les complexités du genre et de l'identité politique a été éclairée à travers les personnages de Kambili, Beatrice, Eugene et Auntie Ifeoma.

Cette analyse a démontré l'importance de « Purple Hibiscus » en tant qu'œuvre littéraire qui remet en question les normes dominantes et propose une critique nuancée de la société patriarcale. La pertinence du roman pour la politique et la société nigérianes a été contextualisée, soulignant son importance en tant qu'œuvre de littérature féministe.

Recommandation

Sur la base de l'analyse de « Purple Hibiscus » de Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, qui met en lumière les luttes auxquelles sont confrontées les femmes dans le paysage politique nigérian, nous recommandons ce qui suit :

1. Réformes politiques sensibles au genre : Le gouvernement nigérian devrait mettre en œuvre des politiques qui promeuvent l'égalité des sexes et remettent en question les normes patriarcales, telles que des quotas pour les femmes occupant des postes politiques.
2. Programmes d'autonomisation : les organisations et les ONG devraient établir des programmes qui autonomisent les femmes politiquement, économiquement et socialement, en s'attaquant aux obstacles systémiques qui les marginalisent.
3. Éducation et sensibilisation : Les établissements d'enseignement et les organisations de la société civile devraient promouvoir la sensibilisation au genre et remettre en question les stéréotypes, en encourageant les hommes et les femmes à plaider en faveur de l'égalité des sexes.
4. Représentation politique : les partis politiques devraient donner la priorité à la représentation des femmes, en leur offrant la possibilité d'occuper des postes de direction et d'influencer les processus de prise de décision.
5. Lutter contre la violence à l'égard des femmes : Le gouvernement et la société civile devraient travailler ensemble pour lutter contre la violence basée sur le genre, en garantissant la sûreté et la sécurité des femmes dans les espaces politiques et publics.

En mettant en œuvre ces recommandations, le Nigeria peut œuvrer vers un paysage politique plus inclusif, luttant contre la marginalisation des femmes et promouvant l'égalité des sexes.

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**Investigating Masculinities Enactment and Its Psychological Undercurrents in Fugard's
"Master Harold"...and the Boys**

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Abstract

This paper explores masculinities enactment in a racial environment where men are treated as second class citizens. Traditionally, men have been made to carry the guilt of the oppression of women as the narrative has always been that men are originator and promoter of patriarchy. From Feminists' perspective, men have enjoyed patriarchal privileges that give them undue advantage over women. Women scholars have supported this narrative for a long time until recently when studies confirm that men enact masculinities at different hierarchical levels and have different statuses in terms of role exhibition. Situated in racial clime, men are, therefore, made to carry a double yoke of emasculation by circumstances that challenge their manhood and racial discrimination that further place upon them the burden of oppression in all spheres. Using a combination of Psychoanalysis and Masculinities as tools of analysis, the study employs a qualitative approach which involves a literary text analysis of Athol Fugard's "Master Harold"... and the Boys. Findings reveal that not all men are macho and capable of exhibiting masculine traits constructed for them as men in their social milieu. Again, the study discovers that not all men exhibit provider roles as husbands and fathers as some men are actually emasculated having lost their breadwinning masculine role to their wives and become irresponsible fathers. The experiences of the Blacks in South Africa under the oppression of racial discrimination confirm W.E.B Du Bois' assertion that Black men in a racial environment are carrying a double yoke. It is, therefore, suggested that men enacting hegemonic masculinities should be conscious of other weak men made so by poor economic circumstance that incapacitates them. Black men in a racial environment should purge themselves of toxic masculinity associated with hypo-masculinity enactment and instead embrace pro-feminists notion of masculinity which promotes cooperation of sexes.

Keywords: Subordinated, Complicit, Hegemonic, Hypo-masculinity, Patriarchy

Introduction

For the male gender, the perception of manhood is a function of cultural orientation from childhood to adulthood. He, therefore, grows to understand his role as a man who has to provide for and defend his family in all ramifications, as against the woman who is culturally subordinated to him in terms of power, control and emotional stability. As a result, the male gender is constantly struggling to validate, in all respects, his manhood which confers on him a sense of superiority to women. However, the male gender becomes confused when confronted with situations and circumstances that make the performance of his manhood impossible despite all the cultural definitions given to it. The rift between the cultural expectations of his masculinity and the reality of his male status as a result of changing economic, political and social circumstances put the man in dire strait. He is therefore either at the rung of the ladder as a subordinated masculine character or undefined masculine status called complicit in the enactment of his masculine status and role performance. On top of the ladder which is very rare is the masculinity hierarchal status fashioned after Anthonio Gramsci's hegemonic concept (Gramsci 1971, Dobie 2009). However, what defines a man's place on the masculinity ladder is his masculinity hierarchy. It goes to show how well he is able to perform his masculine gender roles and exhibit his status as a man. All these social nuances define and validate his manhood in the social environment where he grows up as a man. His social construction becomes the definition of his masculinity which also can be both the perception of himself as against how others see him. It is usually when there is a discrepancy between the way he sees himself and how others see him that aggression becomes activated to redeem self-image. According to Baumeister, Smart and Boden (1996)

Aggression emerges from a particular discrepancy between two views of self; a favorable self appraisal and an external appraisal that is much less favorable. That is, people turn aggressive when they receive feedback that contradicts their favorable views of themselves and implies that they should adopt less favorable views...p.8

In the enactment of masculinity on the masculinity hierarchies are crises associated with the way the man is constructed in his social milieu and the way he is perceived by women either at home or his workplace. Hood-Williams 2001 opines that masculinity must be understood phenomenologically because "there is nothing in the character or structuring of the psyche that explains sexual difference"p.52. Masculinity Hood-Williams says does not express an inner, psychic, core "but is the performative work of acts, gestures, enactments" and consequently, "this means recognizing that masculinity must be understood phenomenologically" p.52. Ironically, in his attempt to validate his manhood, he becomes a victim of his own harmful behavior and lifestyle in what Chernova (2001, cited in Irina, N. Keth, p.,Jeff, H. et al, 2005) referred to as 'masculinity crisis'p.155. In this crisis are found low life expectancy and self-destructive practices such as hard drinking, alcoholism, drug abuse, smoking and gluttony. Part of this new crises also according to Whitehead(2002) is the "inability of men to cope with the new expectations of (feminism), combined with the demise of traditional work patterns and male roles..."p.53. Irina, Keth, Hearn *et al* (2005) discusses family socialization pattern with children in a home where it is believed social construction begins to shape the masculinity perception of the boy child. They believe that the "initiatives for changing a father's role in the family are not adequately accompanied by gender-informed educational reforms and creation of societal awareness about the plurality of family models and their social valorization beyond a "universal" nuclear, heterosexual "normal" family" p.156. Michael and Scot (2005) believe that every society

socializes children to learn and internalize “the shared rules and norms that drive collective behavior, thereby allowing them to become self-regulating participants in society” p.233. Cahill, 1986 calls it “shared rules of interpretation and conduct” p.163. This is more or less the code of conduct every member of the society internalizes in order to function well in it (Elkin and Handel, 1989). So boys learn masculinity in the home under the tutelage of their fathers and other older boys or men according to the dictate of the society. In most cases, even mothers and other women help to reinforce this understanding by rewarding masculine acts and rebuking feminine behavior of the boy child. Ultimately, it is in the family that boys first have the understanding of the power and privileges associated with being a man and from there begin to learn masculinity enactment. It is also in the family that the boy grows to become a man and having learnt masculinities, begin to understand the dynamics and contradictions in these power and privileges bestowed through his social construction (Kaufman, 1999).

Synopsis of the Play

Athol Fugard’s *“Master Harold”...and the Boys* (1982) is an autobiographical play about the personal life of the icon, Athol Harold Lannigan Fugard under an intolerable Apartheid clime. The play has won international distinction for daring to explore family ties in South African Apartheid setting. Fugard exposes in this play the racial circumstances that defined manhood and questions what racism has to do with being a responsible father and the pains and shame of failed expectations between father and son. Hally, a young, white South African boy with an irresponsible father from whom he supposed to learn masculinity, becomes emotionally attached to Sam, the black waiter in his parents’ restaurant. He grows up an unhappy child because of the shame and humiliation he gets from his father’s irresponsibility as a chronic alcoholic.

Fugard himself confesses that *“Master Harold”...and the Boys* is a gamble because it was initially meant to be just a play about a seven-year-old white boy and his friendship with two black men. Hally grows up under the tutelage of these two black men who double as friends and parents. His father is never available for him. The little he knows about his fatherhood is learnt from his mother, as a wife of feeble irresponsible alcoholic. From his telephone conversation, he reveals his mother as the boss: “You are the boss...If he is going to behave like a child, treat him like one (p.1429).

As a young lad, Hally learns masculinity first hand from his black friends because he is always left in their care. His father, Harold, constitutes nuisance at home, messing himself up, sometimes drunk and has to be taken home. Hally particularly wants him permanently kept at the hospital to be taken care of by the nurses and his mother. Any time, his father is around, his mother has to keep her bag away as he pilfers from it to get drunk. So addicted to alcoholism that he has to borrow from Hally the money meant for his science book. The hospital discharges his father against Hally and his mother’s disapproval and he becomes more irritated and disillusioned. His disillusionment takes the better of him as he smashes the brandy bottle he has picked from the shop for his father. The thought of going home to meet an infirm, weak, sickly, irresponsible and feeble father engenders psychological trauma in him. However, he takes this emotional trauma on the two black waiters who also double as friends and parents.

As a mark of his transition from boyhood to adulthood, Hally demands of Sam, his mentor that he should be addressed Master Harold. This demand strains the relationship between them as Harry begins

to give orders to Sam, reminding him he is just a servant to his family. The argument becomes hot between the two and as Sam made to go to avoid further damage, Hally calls him back and spits in his face. Hally's revulsion for his father's shameful act that brings the family disrepute is at the heart of his psychological trauma.

He loses sense of decency when Sam cautions him from using uncomplimentary words for his father. Sam reminds him that "it would have been so simple if you could have despised him for being a weak man. But he is your father. You love him but you are ashamed of him... That's not the way a boy grows to be a man" (p. 1437). Sam forgives him even as Hally tries to veil his obvious disappointment in himself and his failed attempt to be a man. Sam tries to put everything behind him as a way of further teaching him that manliness is not when 'you spit in people's face but ability to control your emotion and balance your thought.'

Framework for the Study

The framework for the study is Freud's psychoanalysis. According to Kirsznner and Mandell (2001) the "major points of Freud's theories depend on the idea that much of what is most significant to us does not take place in our conscious life" (p. 1953). According to them, Freud believes that we have been compelled to force under-ground most of our desires and urges in order to comply with society's demands and co-exist with other members of the society. Freud also believes that some of these repressed experiences and desires are "available to us through dreams and other unconscious desires" and that interaction could often be interpreted as "the reflection of our unconscious life" (p. 1953). Some of these complex issues in the subconscious state of the minds of characters are explored by the creative writer whose intention for such thematic exploration can also be psychoanalyzed in what is termed psychobiography.

Freud's principles of psychoanalysis, critics have argued, are as useful to modern works of art as they are to works that have been produced long before their inventions. This is possible because those principles discovered by Freud and those who followed him such as Jung, Ernest Jones, and Lacan "are inherent in human nature" (p. 1954).

In this study, Freud's tripartite psyche of the *id*, *ego* and the *superego* was applied to the investigation of the subconscious and the conscious states of mind of male characters in the play. As a tool of analysis, psychoanalytical theory was employed in the appraisal and examination of characters in the selected play. The analysis subjected the tools of psycho-analysis to the examination of emasculated characters and the social conditions that create them in the selected play. Therefore, the tools have helped the study to interrogate some actions to know why some characters acted the way they did. The notion of "why things are what they are," "why characters act where they do" actually helped to know whether or not the identified characters have acted on the dictate of conscience, emotion or reason.

Subordinated Masculinity Enactment, Race and the Unconscious Dynamics in "Master Harold"...and the Boys

Subordinated masculinity is the form of masculinity usually enacted by male character with status and traits considered inconsistent with traits and behavior of real men. The traits and status expected of real men bother on the behavior, profession, position and some human qualities associated with male personality as defined by the society. So, any deviation in the exhibition of such traits and personality render the male character unworthy and incomplete. This sense of inadequacy emasculates the man

leaving him in a quandary about his identity as a man constructed so by the society where he grows to learn manliness. Of course, this sense of inadequacy results to diminishing self-esteem, humiliation, self-pity and transferred aggression. These are the experiences of male personalities enacting subordinated masculinity. All the male characters in "*Master Harold*" ...and the Bys are conditioned to enact subordinated masculinity as a result of one social circumstance or the other. For instance, Sam and Willie are subordinated to Master Harold, his wife and their seventeen-year old boy, Hally as a result of the apartheid policy that confers on them an inferiority status as conquered people. The social system (apartheid) under which they operate is fraught with segregation, oppression and discrimination that force or compel them to be subservient to their white masters. In such social relations, servitude becomes a defining factor that separates masters from servants.

Although Sam and Willie attempt to teach Hally how to be a man, by being available for him in place of his escapist, irresponsible father, their own manliness is striped off them by the apartheid condition that makes them less than men. They are waiters in Hally mother's restaurant under a social circumstance a little better than slavery. As a matter of fact, Hally makes a passing reference to that when he reminds Sam that the white freed his forefather from slavery. According to him, rather than Abraham Lincoln, he should have mentioned William Wilberforce as his "man of magnitude", as they attempt to probe "into the intellectual heritage of our civilization" (p. 1425). He says:

Hally: I might have guessed as much. Don't get sentimental,
Sam. You've never been a slave, you know. And anyway, we
freed your ancestors here in South Africa before the
Americans. But if you want to thank somebody on their
behalf, do it to William Wilberforce (p. 1425).

Hally's attempt at making Sam understand his underprivileged position, first as a waiter and second as a black man, calls to attention his subordination to him, his father and mother. Sam's counsel that Hally should withdraw despicable statements about his father, only further emboldens Hally to put him where he belongs. He warns him to stop meddling in his family affairs and face the job for which he is paid. Although Sam has been playing the role of a father, trying to help the young boy to have confidence in himself in the absence of his irresponsible father, the time has come for that to end as Hally grows to recognize his manhood and privileged position as a white boy in an apartheid enclave.

To subordinate Sam has been a morally difficult task for Hally considering what they have gone through together and how he has helped cover up for his father's shameful behavior. However, as Hally becomes conscious of his status as a white young man growing to adulthood, he begins to properly place Sam, his erstwhile father figure. He warns Sam:

Hally: All that concerns you here, Sam is to try and do what
you get paid for... keep the place clean and serve the
customers. In plain words, just get on with your job. My
mother is right. She's always warning me about allowing you
get too familiar. Well this time you've gone too far. It's going
to stop right now. (p. 1435).

Sam is shocked beyond words. All the sense of being an “acting father” providing the moral stability for a young white boy growing to become a responsible young man pale into insignificance as Hally moves to assert his authority. Sam’s subordination is a function of his status as a man of colour under a discriminating apartheid policy, the age difference between him and Hally coupled with being a waiter at Harold’s restaurant. The age difference is a strong indicator of his subordination. Sam, a man in his mid-forties made subservient to a seventeen year-old white boy. The feeling of inferiority cows Sam so much so that when Hally addresses him like a small boy, he could not respond, even though he wishes to.

In an attempt to provoke a response, Hally reminds him “you are still a servant here, and don’t forget it. (*still no response*) And as far as my father is concerned, all you need to remember is that he is your boss” (p. 1435). Sam’s humiliation gets to its head when Hally orders him not to walk out on him. “Don’t turn your back on me! I haven’t finished talking” (p. 1435). Hally tries his hands on a couple of things not only to humiliate Sam but to put him down, in order to whip him to submission. He demands that Sam should start addressing him as ‘Master Harold’ like Willie:

Hally: It’s good news. Because that is exactly what Master Harold wants from now on. Think of it as a little lesson in respect, Sam, that’s long overdue, and I hope you remember it as well as you do your geography. I can tell you now that somebody who will be glad to hear I’ve finally given it to you will be my Dad. Yes! He agrees with my mum. He’s always going about it as well. “You must teach the boys to show you more respect, my son” (p. 1436).

Sam enacts subordinated masculinity like Willie, his friend, basically because of apartheid social system that also compels economic dependency. All these factors combine to emasculate them. Both Sam and Willie are carrying double yoke first as men of color and secondly, being subjected to social and economic deprivation. He feels diminishing self-esteem when Hally spits in his face. The man in him dies. He feels empty and despised as a failure. In an emotion-laden voice he says:

Sam: (*his violence ebbing away into defeat as quickly as it flooded*) You don’t know all of what you’ve just done... Master Harold, it’s not just that you’ve made me feel dirtier than I’ve ever been in my life... I mean, how do I wash off yours and your father’s filth?... I’ve also failed. A long time ago I promised myself I was going to try and do something, but you’ve just shown me... Master Harold... that I’ve failed (p. 1437).

The verbal assault above is a function of self-violation, self-pity and a sad reminder of Sam’s open sore bruised by a young boy he suffers so much to raise in the absence of his drunk father.

Hally also enacts subordinated masculinity due largely to the psychological emasculation he suffers as a young boy who has to live with the shameful behavior of his father. He feels ashamed of his father who is not only physically disabled but weak, effete and irresponsible. His father’s behavior as a shameless drunk gives Hally the image of a son of an irresponsible father. To him, this image is a

stigma he continues to fight to stave off without success. The image becomes to him a moral burden he strives to cast off in order to assert himself as Master Harold especially to Sam. This explains why he doesn't want his father at home, rather he compels his mother to hold him down on the hospital bed. No wonder when his mother says she has discharged Harold from the hospital, Hally becomes agitated, furious and rude. He queries his mother:

Hally: Why did you do it, mum?... Well, I just hope you know what you've let us in for! It's the end of the peace and quiet we've been having... I told you to be firm with him... then you and the nurses should have held him down, taken his crutches away... I'm sick and tired of emptying stinking chamber pots full of phlegm and piss (p. 1434).

However, when Hally tries to assert his authority in an attempt to probably prove his manhood, his father's shameful image comes haunting him as a prelude to the humiliation and self-hurt that will eventually humble him. Sam has counseled him not to make his father a butt of painful jokes no matter what. He says:

Sam: No Hally, you musn't do it. Take back those words and ask for forgiveness! It is a terrible sin for a son to mock his father with jokes like that. You'll be punished if you carry on. Your father is your father, even if he is a cripple man (p. 1435).

Sam's intervention is actually a prelude to his emasculation and the dilemma he finds himself in the bid to be his own man and assert his manhood. Subordinated masculinity enactment usually provokes bottled emotion as the helpless male personality tries to transfer aggression by activating masculine defense mechanism as a face-saving strategy. Hally in this circumstance responds by spitting in Sam's face for opening an old wound of his father's humiliating escapade which Sam has witnessed and helped launder. For spitting in his face, Sam strips Hally naked by taking him down memory lane reminding him how he has helped pick his drunk father from the street and clean him up. He says;

Sam: It was the old jubilee days, after dinner one night. I was in my room. You came in and just stood against the wall, looking down at the ground, and only after I'd asked you what you wanted, what was wrong, I don't know how many times did you speak and even then so softly I almost didn't hear you. "Sam, please help me to go and fetch my Dad" Remember? He was dead drunk on the floor of the central Hotel Bar... Then I loaded him onto my back like a baby and carried him back to the boarding house with you following behind carrying his crutches...(p. 1437).

Hally becomes dejected as the memory comes back to him. He wishes it has never happened, because his ego is bruised beyond measure even as he feels a sense of guilt for biting a finger that fed him. Hally suffers Freudian guilt complex because of the overwhelming unconscious guilt as a result of his father's shameful behavior. Rather than being proud of a father's exploits, Hally is ashamed of the ugly

past being unveiled to him by Sam, his father figure, to whom he has been ungrateful. Reminiscence of a man in pain of a failed project, Sam shakes his head as he remembers in retrospect:

Sam: A crowded main street with all the people watching a little white boy following his drunk father on a nigger's back! I felt for that little boy... Master Harold. I felt for him. After that we still had to clean him up, remember? He'd messed in his trouser, so we had to clean him up and get him into bed (p. 1437).

The shame of his father's ugly past psychologically castrates Hally and humbles him in a way that makes him despise his father as a weak man. He loses his self-esteem and in dilemma of what to do with his quest to asserting his manhood and the moral guilt of a shameful drunk as a father. Sam reminds him "After we got him to bed you came back with me to my room and sat in a corner and carried on just looking down at the ground... You went around as if you owed the world an apology for being alive. That's not the way a boy grows to be a man" (p. 1437). Hally enacts subordinated masculinity despite failed attempts to assert his manhood via a masculine status conferred by the apartheid situation and an average economic power as the son of a restaurant owner.

His helplessness comes about as a result of his father's ugly image and irresponsibility as a role model. Sam arrogates Hally's dilemma and pain to his father's undesirable behavior and absentee syndrome when he reminds him "That is not the way a boy grows up to be a man!... But the one person who should have been teaching you what that means was the cause of your shame" (p. 1437).

In addition to subordinated masculinity is hypo-masculinity which is now redefined as toxic masculinity. It is a form of extreme masculinity enactment where the male character seeks the total suppression of the opposite sex and over gratifies his sexual prowess as a man. It is in itself a form of weakness in the enactment of masculinity by men considered effete in all ramifications. For instance, Harold is discovered to enact this form of masculinity as a man in search of masculine identity. Harold's hypo-masculinity enactment comes to the fore when Sam and Willie who are the waiters in the family restaurant reject him as their boss. He is weak physically as a cripple dependent on crutches to walk, a regular patrons in hospital, frail, a drunk, shameful and irresponsible father. He fails to be available as a father to his son, Hally, and a pain in the neck for the entire family. Harold loses respect and self-esteem before his wife, his son Hally, the waiters and every individual black and white who knows him as a drunk. Harold has relinquished the masculine gender role as a bread winner and emotional stabilizer to his wife who Hally says is the 'boss.' According to him;

Hally: He didn't look at all good last night. How can he get better so quickly?... Then very obviously you must say no. Be firm with him. You are the boss... order him to get back into bed at once! If he's going to behave like a child, treat him like one!... All it needs is for you to put your foot down. Don't take no for an answer. (p. 1429).

All the four characters experience a sense of inadequacy that makes them feel less than men. As much as they try to assert their manhood, certain social and psychological circumstances come together to emasculate them causing their perplexity as to what to do. When a man suffers rejection and humiliation, there is high tendency for him to feel a sense of inadequacy, frailty, weakness and emotional wreckage which are all indices of hypo-masculinity enactment.

Such experiences combine to cause dilemma which necessitates the activation of masculine defense mechanism that results to both physical and psychological violence. Harold's rejection is not just as a result of his shameful image, but because of his violent disposition to his wife especially when he is drunk. That is why Hally warns his mother "I'm not going to be the peacemaker anymore. I'm warning you now; when the two of you start fighting again. I'm leaving home... mom, if you start crying..." (p. 1434). Willie, Sam, Hally and Harold, all enact subordinated masculinity as a result of the apartheid policy for the blacks and psychosocial circumstances for the whites who could not assert their manhood despite apartheid privileges.

In both men's masculine mystique reside Freudian unconscious dynamics of male's behavior which is a function of "forces we do not recognize and therefore cannot control." Dobie (2009:52) Prominent among these unconscious dynamics are fear of femininity, fear of emasculation, diminishing self-esteem and anxiety.

Men usually perceive loss of power and control to women as a "threat to their masculine gender-role identity. Loss of power and control may imply loss of masculine gender-role identity, thereby stimulating defensiveness, and deep emotion" (Kahn 1984).

Masculine mystique usually results when gender role is distorted and this eventually gives rise to dilemma, a byproduct of social, economic and psychological emasculation.

Hally in Fugard's *"Master Harold" ...and the Boys* enacts a masculinity that is at variance with Surdyvant's or Levee's in August Wilson's *Ma Rainey Black Bottom*, in terms of masculine mystique because of his belief in his mother as the head of the family. He does not see anything manly about his father. As a matter of fact, his sarcastic description of his father as a 'cripple' is a passing reference to his father's physical disability and psychological failure as a father. He imagines the cripples on the dance floor, the sight of their quickstep and the fun it will elicit. The group's failure in dance competition, he sarcastically says, is as a result of the cripples they leave out of the dance.

HALLY (now totally reckless): ...That's why we always end up on our backsides on the dance floor. They're also out there dancing... like a bunch of broken spiders trying to do the quickstep! (*An ugly attempt at laughter.*) When you come to think of it, it's a bloody comical sight. I mean, it's bad enough on two legs...but one and a pair of crutches! Hell, no, Sam. That's enough to turn that dance floor into a shambles...**p.1435.**

Here, it is not only the dance floor that is in shambles in Hally's estimation but his entire life as a boy growing to become a man. The dance floor serves as the setting for his masculinity performance while his wobbly outing as a metaphor for his abandonment by his escapist father who he sees as a complete failure. Therefore, to Hally, masculine mystique is performed in the reverse because a father with a

fractured masculinity can never nurture a young boy to become a man. No wonder, he sees the man in his mother not Harold, his father. For instance, he says treat him like a baby. You are the boss etc Hally in Fugard's "*Master Harold*"... *and the Boys*, unlike Levee in August Wilson's *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* (1985) suffers psychological trauma arising from the absence and irresponsibility of his father, Harold. Masculinity enactment to Hally, is strange and confusing. What constitutes manhood is not clearly spelt out for him as a white young boy by both Sam and Willie, the two black Africans who he grows to know as father figures in an Apartheid enclave that does not socially sanction such relationship. Although Hally appreciates the black men's role in filling the gap for his father, he however, wishes the past could be wished away as he grows from a toddler to a boy, and from a boy advancing to become a man. He remembers how Sam helps him to overcome the difficulty of flying a kite and the courage that exploits bestows on him as a young boy when his father is nowhere to be found. With emotion laden voice he recalls:

Hally: You went a little distance from me down the hill, you held it up ready to let go....This is it, I thought. Like everything else in my life, here comes another fiasco." Then you shouted "Go,Hally!" and I started to run. (Another pause) I don't know how to describe it, Sam. Ja! The miracle happened! I was running, waiting for it to crash to the ground, but instead suddenly there was something alive behind me at the end of the string, tugging at it as if it wanted to be free. I looked back...(Shakes his head)...I still can't believe my eyes. It was flying!....You came up and joined me. You were laughing.p.1428

Sam: So were you. And shouting, "It works, Sam! We've done it"p.1428

This experience is so vital to Hally's growth process because it prepares him psychologically to become a man. At a time when his escapist father is nowhere, failure could have spelled disaster for him as a young boy but for Sam who stabilizes him emotionally. He has thought that the kite flying experience would be a "fiasco," a humiliating experience that could have left a dark spot in his life as a young growing boy who has always learnt masculinity from his mother and the two black men. Hally confesses "it could have been suicidal if anything had happened to it."p.1428. The fact that his father has not always been there to prepare him to become a man, makes Hally to have wrong understanding of what manhood is as a young man. This point he emphasizes to draw attention to the fact that with an absentee father life for him as a young man would probably be miserable without Sam. His attachment to Sam, the black man, in an apartheid clime, and what they have done together, are the only pleasant memories Hally is happy to recall as he grows to become a man. No wonder, he considers those memories and experiences as 'strange' because they are not to be learnt from strangers but one's own father. These memories have compelled him not only to study Sam but according to Fugard (*made him conscious of the man's presence in his life.*) Strange also because of age difference (it takes a father to do that to his son) and would have been extremely strange, if it were to be with Harold, his father who has never been there for him. He wonders the connection that will make a

Hally: Little white boy in short trousers and a black man old

enough to be his father flying a kite. It's not every day you see that. p.1428. This feat, Hally, confesses "would have been just as strange, I suppose, if it had been me and my Dad...cripple man and a little boy! Nope! There is no chance of me flying a kite without it being strange (*Simple statement of fact—no self-pity*)
p.1428

Discussion and Findings

The study discovers that the enactment of masculinity by any man black or white is a function of his place on the masculinity ladder otherwise referred to as masculinity hierarchies. It goes to show that among men, there are hierarchies of masculinity the commonest of which is subordinated masculinity as revealed in this study. It was discovered that all the male characters enact subordinated masculinity irrespective of race and social status. Finding also reveals that the so-called white oppressors, privileged by the reason of apartheid policy could not enact the highest masculinity hierarchy of hegemonic. For instance, Hally has to learn masculinity traits and enjoy fatherly care from the two black men who are themselves subordinated by reason of their economic disability and low social status. Unlike Levee who learns masculinity from his brave father in Wilson's *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* (1985), Hally, learns courage and manliness from Sam and Willie, two black men working for his parents. He, however, runs into trouble when he becomes conscious of his status as a white boy raised by black men in apartheid South Africa. His attempt to assert his manliness on those who teach him how to be a man becomes the contradiction and dilemma Hally has to contend with. Of course, the apartheid environment that confers on Harold, his irresponsible, alcoholic father a racial superiority that makes him a better man than Sam and Willie, also creates for Hally a contradiction of how to be superior to those who teach him how to be a man. For instance, as a mark of Hally's growth from a little boy to a man, he begins to assert himself especially as he grows to become conscious of his superior status as a white boy. When cautioned by Sam to stop mocking his father, Hally is quick to remind him "What goes on between me and my Dad is none of your business!" p.1435. Now conscious of his status as a white boy, Hally reminds the two black men they are mere servants and blacks who must show respect to their white superiors including him. He warns: "All that concerns you here, Sam, is to try and do what you get paid for—keep the place clean and serve the customers. In plain words, just get on with your job. My mother is right. She's always warning me about allowing you get too familiar. Well, this time you've gone too far. It's going to stop right now..." **p.1435**. He tells them not to forget that they are mere servants: "You're only a servant in here, and don't forget it." **p.1435**.

Finding further reveals that as a white boy, Hally could not enact anything above subordinated masculinity because he has not learnt manhood from his father. Therefore, to enact a masculinity of the white male becomes a Herculean task for him and this accounts for the psychological violence he commits against Sam, his father figure when he spits in his face. The study also reveals the precarious situation the black man faces in the face of racial discrimination. Dubois (1994) refers to this as double yoke. The burden of being emasculated by social and economic deprivation and the psychological mystification he is subjected to as a man of color in an unfriendly racial environment put on the black man a double yoke. The most visible form of masculinity enactment in "*Master Harold*"...and the *Boys* is subordinated masculinity enacted by Sam, Willie, Hally and Master Harold, all four male characters under different circumstances. The apartheid situation, no doubt, emasculates Sam and Willie who though serve as father figures to Hally, enact subordinated masculinity. Hally and his father, Harold despite the apartheid regime that confers on them the sense of superiority as white South

Africans, enact like Willie and Sam, subordinated masculinity. Although there are other forms of masculinities enacted by the men in the apartheid enclave, the most visible form of masculinity enacted by both whites and blacks is subordinated masculinity.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, subordinated masculinity is not a desirable masculinity enactment for both black and white men under review especially in a racial environment. A man loses his self-worth, when he is demeaned and emasculated by the socio-economic circumstances that make him vulnerable to diminishing self-esteem and bruised ego. For instance, the moment Hally becomes conscious of his privileged status as a white boy in an apartheid enclave, he becomes assertive and this prepares the ground for his misbehavior as he attempts to validate his manhood by demeaning the black men that teach him manliness. He spits in Willie's face, yet he ends up with subordinated masculinity despite the privileges apartheid confers. This makes subordinated masculinity the commonest masculinity enactment among the men in their interaction with themselves and the opposite sex, black or white. It is therefore, suggested that men enacting hegemonic masculinities should be conscious of other weak men made so by poor economic status that incapacitates them. Black men in a racial environment should purge themselves of toxic masculinity associated with hypo-masculinity enactment and instead embrace pro-feminists notion of masculinity which promotes cooperation of sexes and men of different statuses and traits.

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Rapport Synergique entre la Littérature et L'histoire: d'Oran A Wuhan

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Résumé

Shakespeare ne disait-il pas que le monde est un théâtre. C'est ainsi que le monde se réveille au théâtre du bacille de la peste qui perdure six mois, de la fin de 2019 au milieu de 2020. Cet article vise donc en premier lieu à montrer la synergie entre l'histoire et la littérature ainsi qu'à démontrer la fonction cathartique et prophétique que peut assumer la littérature dans son rôle du monument social et culturel d'un peuple. Les chercheurs ont entrepris des recherches approfondies dans les bibliothèques et à l'internet pour se documenter afin d'avoir une connaissance vaste et variée sur le sujet. Ces recherches ont donné le résultat escompté leur permettant de structurer, d'ordonner et d'organiser leur recherche. L'article donne une note de vérité à l'assertion que l'histoire et la littérature se nourrissent mutuellement et que la littérature est le miroir de la société. Elle a également fait revivre l'histoire dans sa dimension sociale.

Mots-clés : Histoire, littérature, bacille de la peste, prophétie, fonction cathartique

Introduction

Le titre de cet article, rapport synergique entre la littérature et l'histoire: d'Oran à Wuhan, peut paraître déroutant. Mais à y regarder de plus près, il reflète la dure réalité qu'a vécu le monde il y a presque cinq ans ainsi que le rôle cathartique et surtout prophétique que peut assumer la littérature. Ce n'est pour rien que Gallimard décide de rééditer *La Peste* de Camus et que les ventes de ce roman montent en flèche partout en Europe. Catherine Camus, la fille du romancier, a même dit, dans un programme télévisé, que c'est impressionnant que son père ait en effet donné la prophétie du siècle. Comme pour parler de la prophétie, l'écrivain français du XIX^e siècle, Victor Hugo, ne disait-il pas que l'écrivain, en occurrence le poète, est un voyant. La littérature, les faits l'ont démontré, a toujours joué son rôle du miroir de la société. Ce que l'écrivain fait, comme l'estime Stendhal, c'est de promener ce miroir sur le long du chemin (Rincé 69).

Pour bien suivre l'itinéraire d'Oran à Wuhan engagé dans cet article, nous allons, comme dans les tragédies classiques, répartir notre intervention en cinq parties. Ainsi allons-nous revoir le phénomène des résurgences de la peste dans le monde. Deuxièmement nous allons faire revivre la situation à Oran telle que racontée par Camus dans *La Peste* (1947). En troisième lieu nous allons faire ressortir la genèse de la pandémie de Wuhan dont est victime l'humanité. Comme notre trajectoire nous mène d'Oran à Wuhan, la quatrième partie va se focaliser sur l'analyse des convergences et des divergences dans les situations oranaise et wuhanaise en ce qui concerne la pandémie et ses effets. La cinquième partie qui constitue la phase de clôture va être consacrée à la critique de la situation actuelle, aux ressorts de la pandémie telle qu'elle se vit au Nigeria.

Alors, que nous apprennent l'histoire et la littérature au sujet de la nouveauté du coronavirus ? Est-ce la première fois que le monde est atteint d'une pandémie d'une telle ampleur ?

Le Monde et les Histoires des Pandémies

Le monde s'est vu à plusieurs reprises ravagé dans les périodes différentes par les fléaux et la mémoire des hommes a longtemps été marquée par les souvenirs des grands fléaux de l'histoire. En effet, ce sont ces souvenirs des hommes qui confèrent aux fléaux le statut du mythe qui parle à l'imagination.

Berton nous apprend que l'histoire, grâce à l'historien grec Thucydide, retient des grands fléaux de l'histoire que voici : En 429 avant Jésus Christ, la peste s'abat sur la ville d'Athènes. Plus tard aux VI^e et VII^e siècles après J.C., elle couvre tout le bassin méditerranéen. Cette peste se dénomme la peste de justinien. Elle atteint l'Asie, l'Egypte et l'Italie et fait plus de cinq million de morts et on l'appelle la peste d'Antoine. En un an elle fait vingt-cinq million de morts. Chaque jour le taux de décès s'élevait à dix mille. Le continent européen au XIV^e siècle entre 1347 et 1353, dans sa totalité, fait l'expérience de la peste appelée la peste noire. Elle tua environ vingt-quatre million d'hommes. Elle envahit tout particulièrement Milan en 1575 et en 1630 et devint la cause de nombreuses scènes de débauches dues au désespoir. Les chiffres de morts varient selon les villes européennes. Londres encaisse 36000 de morts en 1603, 35000 en 1625 et 70000 en 1665 et 1666. En 1720 à Marseille le taux de décès se chiffre à 40000. Puis vint le tour de l'Algérie de 1818 à 1822 où la peste sévit et cause de nombreux morts. En 1835 elle s'abat sur Constantine où on dénombra 15000 morts en trois jours. A la fin du XIX^e siècle c'est le tour de la Chine où la peste fait mourir beaucoup d'hommes et de rats. Le cas de la peste retenu au XX^e siècle est celui de l'Algérie en 1931 puis de 1941 à 1943 où 5500, 20000 et 45000 de personnes sont touchées respectivement (Berton, *Histoire de la littérature française. XX^e siècle*, 44-45).

Tout comme l'histoire, la littérature qui se dit le miroir de la société se nourrit des épisodes des pestes qui se font parler d'elles dans le monde. Selon Alluin, des calamités d'une grande ampleur sont devenues tout naturellement objet de récits de la part d'historiens, mais aussi de la part de poètes et de romanciers. Sophocle évoque le fléau dans *Œdipe roi*, Thucydide se fait le chroniqueur de la peste d'Athènes et Lucrèce, quatre siècles plus tard, fait écho à ce récit. L'écrivain médiéval Froissart évoque la peste noire dans ses *Chroniques*. *Le Décameron* de Boccace narre, en son début, l'arrivée de la peste à Florence en 1348. Daniel Defoe, romancier anglais du XVII^e siècle, raconte la peste de Londres (1665) dans un livre écrit en 1722 juste après le surgissement de la peste à Marseille et intitulé *Journal de l'année de la peste*. Manzoni décrit, dans *Les Fiancés* (1827), les manifestations du fléau qui frappe Milan en 1630. Et Chateaubriand évoque la peste qui ravage Marseille dans *Les Mémoires d'outre-tombe*. Camus s'inscrit ainsi dans toute une tradition littéraire dont il est nourri (Alluin, *Profil d'une œuvre : La Peste*, 20).

C'est ainsi que la ville d'Oran prend dans *La Peste* de Camus la suite de la longue série des grandes villes frappées par le fléau.

ORAN : ON SE RAPPELLE

La Peste est le deuxième roman d'Albert Camus après *L'Étranger* et publié chez Gallimard en 1947. C'est une œuvre qui, d'après Darcos et al, peut se lire comme un roman de la condition humaine, car l'œuvre a une portée métaphysique et morale (365). Elle montre les manifestations du mal dans le monde, la souffrance des hommes et tout particulièrement celle des innocents. Elle propose de préserver un sens à la vie par la révolte devant les absurdités de la condition humaine. Elle indique la solidarité comme la voie de la victoire face à l'absurde dans la lutte permettant de trouver le chemin de la dignité (Lecherbonnier et al, *Littérature. Textes et Documents : XX^e siècle*, 494-495)

La Peste écrit à la première personne met en scène un narrateur qui se propose de raconter des événements survenus à Oran dans les années 194. L'action débute le 16 avril quand le Docteur Rieux trouve un rat mort dans son escalier. De lors commencent les découvertes interminables d'autres rats morts qui donnent lieu à la mort de plus en plus nombreuses des personnes infectées par le virus transmis du rat à l'homme. On arrive finalement à identifier cette maladie mortelle comme la peste et les autorités prennent des mesures préventives en ordonnant la fermeture de la ville. Fermée, la ville d'Oran se voit coupée du reste du monde.

Ensuite vient le temps de la lutte et le Dr. Rieux lutte tous les jours contre le fléau. Il est rejoint et aidé par des volontaires avec qui il vient plus ou moins de faire connaissance. Le fléau et la fermeture de la ville ont des conséquences visibles sur la vie des oranais. On note des changements dans les vies et les habitudes des habitants d'Oran. Beaucoup d'Oranais deviennent des séparés, victimes de l'absence des êtres aimés qu'ils ne peuvent rejoindre étant prisonniers dans Oran fermé.

En dépit des efforts déployés par les équipes médicales et les volontaires groupés dans les formations sanitaires, le fléau refuse d'être enrayé et récidive en faisant plus de victimes. Les victimes devinrent plus nombreuses, l'une des plus frappantes est celle d'un enfant, le fils de monsieur Othon. La mort de cet enfant innocent donne lieu à des réactions indignées du Dr. Rieux face à un monde qui laisse souffrir des innocents. A la suite de la mort de cet enfant, le narrateur rend compte, au fil de l'action, des attitudes des personnages principaux face à la peste.

Pour lutter concrètement contre ce fléau un vaccin est mis au point par le Dr. Castel. Malgré cela la lutte semble vaine, mais avec le temps le vaccin commence à donner quelques résultats. Par conséquent, après neuf mois de résistance la peste recule. Les gens commencent à se guérir grâce au vaccin du Dr. Castel. On relâche les mesures et ouvre les portes de la ville. La peste est vaincue. Les gens se mettent à compter et à comptabiliser leurs pertes. Rieux perd sa femme partie se soigner en montagne et son ami Tarrou pour cause de peste.

La victoire contre la peste donne l'allégresse générale à la population qui, libérée enfin, exulte de joie. Cependant, le narrateur rappelle à la fin de sa narration que le bacille de la peste ne meurt jamais et risque de réapparaître un jour. Une injonction prophétique qui semble se manifester à Wuhan.

WUHAN : LIEU DE TOUS LES MALHEURS

Wuhan, une ville chinoise insignifiante par rapport à Beijing et Shanghai, des sièges des pouvoirs politique et économique respectivement, devient du jour au lendemain populaire voire historique du fait de la prophétie d'Oran qui semble s'y manifester.

Comme dans un rêve le monde se réveille dans le mois d'octobre 2019 pour apprendre du gouvernement chinois l'émergence d'une nouvelle épidémie qui fait rage dans la ville de Wuhan. De par le monde les scientifiques se consultent et se collaborent avec ceux de la Chine. Au début le virus, porteur de la maladie, se trouvait chez les rats. De la fin décembre au début janvier les experts chinois confirment que le virus est transmissible de l'animal à l'homme et de l'homme à l'homme. Le 11 janvier 2020 la Chine enregistre son premier décès dû à la nouvelle maladie surnommée déjà la COVID-19. En quelques jours le nombre des morts se multiplie à Wuhan au point que les autorités déclarent un état d'urgence et ordonnent la fermeture de la ville et le confinement de ses populations comme mesures préventives pour endiguer la propagation du virus dans d'autres parties du pays. Mais déjà le pire se fait : la covid-19 étant une maladie infectieuse, contagieuse et transmissible de l'homme à l'homme, le virus se propage à la vitesse d'un éclair et atteint des parties du monde aussi loin de Wuhan que possible du fait des mouvements et des interactions des hommes. C'est ainsi que la COVID-19 atteint l'Europe, l'Amérique du nord et du sud, l'Asie et l'Afrique. La maladie fait des victimes pratiquement dans toutes les parties du monde. Elle n'est plus considérée comme une épidémie, elle devient une pandémie, comme l'estime l'Organisation Mondiale de la Santé (l'OMS). Au fait, le 30 janvier 2020 l'OMS déclare la COVID-19 une urgence de la santé publique internationale. Ironiquement la maladie fait plus de victimes et de rage dans d'autres parties du monde touchées qu'à Wuhan. A un moment, les Etats-Unis, la Grande Bretagne, l'Italie, l'Espagne et la France battent le record des pays qui ont plus de personnes infectées et encaissent plus de morts dus au covid-19. On enregistre près de trois millions de personnes infectées et plus de trois cent mille de morts de par le monde. Le nombre des infectés et des morts accroît au jour le jour. Tous les pays appliquent les mesures de fermeture de ville et de confinement de la population. Le monde scientifique semble dépassé car les efforts déployés semblent insuffisants et ne donnent pas le résultat escompté.

Cette terrible situation que beaucoup aimeraient voir comme un cauchemar passager ramène dans notre mémoire Oran dans *La Peste* de Camus. Et elle nous montre le faible et étroit fil qui relie la fiction et la réalité comme pour dire que toute fiction semble une réalité susceptible (Berton 13).

ENTRE ORAN ET WUHAN : CONVERGENCES ET DIVERGENCES DANS LE MAL ET LES MALHEURS

Depuis l'époque classique jusqu'à nos jours l'un des traits majeurs du roman .traditionnel est la vraisemblance. Une vraisemblance souvent poussée à l'extrême au point qu'on peut parler de la cohabitation entre la fiction et la réalité. *La Peste* d'Albert Camus dont Oran est le cadre est un exemple typique de la vraisemblance réussie. Car, aujourd'hui il semble se manifester à Wuhan et dans le monde entier de fin 2019 à 2020 les propos prophétiques prononcés dans les années 1947 et retrouvés dans le tout dernier paragraphe de *La Peste* :

Ecoutez, en effet, les cris d'allégresse qui montaient de la ville, Rieux se souvenait que cette allégresse était toujours menacée. Car il savait ce que cette foule en joie ignorait, et qu'on peut lire dans les livres, que le bacille de la peste ne meurt ni ne disparaît jamais, qu'il peut rester pendant des dizaines d'années endormi dans les meubles et le linge, qu'il attend patiemment dans les chambres, les caves, les malles, les mouchoirs et les paperasses, et que, peut-être, le jour viendrait où, pour le malheur et l'enseignement des hommes, la peste réveillerait ses rats et les enverrait mourir dans une cité heureuse (279).

Il semble, en effet, que Wuhan est cette cité heureuse dont on parle dans *La Peste*. Car ce qu'Oran représente pour la fiction est ce que Wuhan représente pour la réalité crue et vécue. Et nous retrouvons dans ces deux lieux, tant à Oran qu'à Wuhan, des convergences et des divergences dans les manifestations du mal que le virus.

D'abord au niveau de la découverte de la maladie : tant à Oran qu'à Wuhan cela débute avec les histoires des rats morts dans l'escalier d'un immeuble à Oran et dans le marché à Wuhan. Les découvertes des rats morts se multiplient et le 30 avril à Oran le concierge de l'immeuble tombe d'une curieuse maladie et meurt. De même à Wuhan le 11 janvier un homme de 61ans est atteint et meurt.

La transmission de la maladie de l'animal à l'homme étant établie, on dénombre tant à Oran qu'à Wuhan des cas de fièvre mortelle non identifiée. La fièvre fait de plus en plus de victimes et dans les deux lieux les médecins et d'autres spécialistes se mettent au travail jusqu'à identifier le mal. A Oran on parle de la peste et à Wuhan on surnomme la nouvelle maladie covid-19.

Les échanges de vues entre les médecins dans les deux lieux permettent la mise en place des mesures préventives. A Oran c'est la fermeture de la ville et à Wuhan c'est le confinement de toute une ville. On impose la quarantaine et l'isolement des victimes dans les deux villes.

Au niveau des effets de la maladie, les mesures préventives prises ont des effets sur les populations des deux villes. A Oran la fermeture de la ville fait en sorte que les Oranais prennent conscience de leur situation pestiférée. On note les souffrances des séparés. Il est interdit à la population oranaise de correspondre en raison des risques de contagion et aussi de téléphoner pour que les lignes puissent être réservées aux seuls cas urgents. Les séparés découvrent la jalousie, la solitude et le sentiment de l'exil. A Oran les habitudes se transforment en raison du rationnement et des restrictions à la circulation. Certains, comme Cottard, se réjouissent de la situation et souhaitent sa continuité tandis que d'autres se plaignent des restrictions imposées, du rationnement des divers produits et des changements forcés dans leurs habitudes dus à la situation. Aussi à Oran la religion se mêle à la situation : un prêtre jésuite, le père Paneloux, prêche et explique que Dieu a laissé le fléau s'abattre sur les Oranais pour leur faire

prendre conscience de la tiédeur de leur croyance et de la nécessité de revenir à la foi. Pour faire face à la peste à Oran beaucoup de gens s'engagent de diverses manières dans la lutte : il y a des équipes de soin surnommées les formations sanitaires volontaires qui aident les médecins à soigner les malades. Il y a également les équipes de médecins qui se lancent dans la recherche du vaccin. Il y a des séparés aussi qui supportent mal la claustration imposée par la fermeture de la ville et recherchent des moyens légaux et illégaux pour s'en sortir pour retrouver les leurs.

A Wuhan les effets du covid-19 sont les mêmes que ceux de la peste à Oran. La grande divergence est que pendant que la peste à Oran est considérée comme une épidémie restreinte à la seule ville oranaise coupée du reste du monde par la fermeture de ses frontières, la COVID-19 est passé de l'épidémie à la pandémie du fait de sa propagation rapide dans tous les coins du monde. Depuis Wuhan, l'épicentre de la COVID-19 à ses débuts, jusqu'à d'autres pays du monde, les mesures préventives sont presque les mêmes : confinement, isolement, quarantaine, éloignement social, fermeture des frontières et cetera. Si la peste est une maladie d'Oran, la COVID-19 cesse très vite d'être une maladie de Wuhan pour devenir celle du monde entier grâce à sa propagation prodigieuse et à sa capacité d'atteindre tous les cinq continents. L'Organisation Mondiale de la Santé l'appelle « urgence de santé publique internationale ».

Outre ces effets mentionnés ci-dessus et constatés dans les deux villes d'Oran et de Wuhan, la COVID-19 qui est maintenant une maladie globale se mêle à beaucoup d'intrigues, de complots imaginés et de conspirations vraisemblances. On parle d'une tentative de réduire la population globale menée par Bill Gates et les grandes familles riches du monde. On parle aussi d'une conspiration contre les chrétiens avec la technologie 5G qui doit amener le règne de l'antéchrist avec la marque 666. On parle du complot contre les pauvres surtout ceux de l'Afrique et de l'Asie. Tous les médias sociaux, Facebook, Whatsapp, Instagram, Twitter, Youtube, sont sollicités et débordés de ces histoires de complots et de conspirations inventées. Les gens en vivent et s'en nourrissent pour passer les temps de confinement.

Tant à Oran qu'à Wuhan, la peste comme la COVID-19 est une maladie progressive qui atteint le sommet du plateau dans quelque mois. Pour la peste à Oran c'est au milieu du mois d'août en plein été et pour covid-19 c'est entre les mois de mars et d'avril. Donc pour les deux maladies la situation au sommet du plateau est catastrophique : A Oran, le vent d'été souffle et la peste recouvre tout. Elle gagne le centre-ville où certains quartiers sont isolés. Après c'est le tour de la prison d'être atteinte. Dans les villes et dans certains quartiers, on assiste à des scènes de violence, de pillages et d'incendie ce qui amène l'institution du couvre-feu. En raison de la montée de taux de décès, les enterrements de plus en plus nombreux se déroulent selon un cérémonial de plus en plus rapide. A un moment donné on manque de cercueils et on transporte les monceaux de corps dans les ambulances, puis dans des tramways pour les jeter dans deux fosses communes selon les sexes. Après on jette tous les morts quel que soit le sexe dans une seule fosse avant de décider de les brûler dans des fours crématoires. Les mêmes choses se passent à Wuhan et dans d'autres parties du monde où sévit la COVID-19 comme l'Italie, l'Espagne, la France et les Etats-Unis et qui surpasse Wuhan par nombre de cas et de décès pour devenir les épicentres de la maladie au sommet du plateau. Entre mars et avril à Wuhan et de par le monde on enregistre près de quatre millions de personnes infectées et près de trois cent mille morts. Dans certains pays comme les Etats-Unis on enregistre plus de mille morts dans une seule journée durant le sommet du plateau de la maladie. A un moment donné le premier ministre italien et son pays se disent dépassés par la situation et se remettent au ciel.

Les effets au sommet de la maladie tant à Oran qu'à Wuhan font en sorte que les populations s'y installent et s'y habituent. A Oran plus précisément on voit des gens, comme Rambert, qui cherchent à sortir de la ville fermée se revirent quand tout est fixé et que tout semble prêt pour leur sortie. Les gens, comme le juge Othon, qui devient plus humain en raison de la perte des êtres chers. Des prêtres qui changent leur prédication et voient leur foi fléchir ayant assisté à l'agonie et à la mort des enfants innocents. A Wuhan et de par le monde les gens s'acclimatent à la claustration et à la mise en quarantaine imposées par le confinement et le couvre-feu qui s'en suit.

CRITIQUE DE LA SITUATION ACTUELLE

« Un monde confiné », pour paraphraser le titre d'un reportage télévisé de France24, voilà la situation à la fois dramatique et effrayante que vit le monde pendant la pandémie de Covid. Depuis Wuhan la nouvelle maladie, la COVID-19, atteint toutes les parties du monde. Tout comme un esprit malveillant il se promène et laisse derrière lui et sur son sillage un cortège des infectés et des morts. Les langues se délient et on assiste à des actions aussi rocambolesques que surréels surtout dans notre partie du monde que le Nigeria.

Au Nigeria on a plus d'une douzaine de versions concernant comment le virus est entré dans le pays. Quand les citoyens de la première classe sont les premiers atteints, on surnomme la nouvelle maladie « the big man sickness ». Lorsque le virus se met à se propager et commence à faire des ravages, le gouvernement se réveille en sursaut. Le président condescend de parler à la presse et des mesures copiées et celles à la nigériane se mettent en place. On assiste à l'arrestation et au jugement intempestif des gens qui fêtent. Des actes de pillage et de brigandage se multiplient. Comme une mise en abîme dans un théâtre, on parle de l'émergence d'une autre maladie en plein covid surnommée « Huvid-20 » pour « Hunger virus 2020 ». C'est évidemment les effets du confinement sans mesures palliatives adéquates ou supports aux familles démunies qui en sont les causes.

Le Nigeria est un pays où il semble exister un grand fossé entre le gouvernement et les gouvernés. Par conséquent la confiance semble inexistante et les actions gouvernementales ne semblent pas être prises au sérieux. Les chiffres des infectés et des morts données par les autorités sont contestées. Les gens tendent à croire qu'il y a une tentative de la part des autorités à minimiser les conséquences drastiques et négatives de la COVID-19 en matière des nombres des infectés et des morts. Les morts mystérieuses de l'Etat de Kano semblent valider cette thèse. Partout dans le pays ce sont des actions et des réactions familières et inhabituelles. On commence à distribuer les palliatifs en matière de denrées alimentaires. Les citoyens crient au complot, à l'empoisonnement. Les autorités montent au créneau pour réfuter les allégations. En tout et dans tout, personne ne sait à quel dieu il faut croire ni où mettre la tête. Un mois passé dans le confinement et sans issue. Et on attend dans l'attente le jour de la joie, de l'allégresse générale et de la libération comme les Oranais.

Conclusion

Nous avons présenté dans cet article un tour d’horizon sur le rapport entre l’histoire et la littérature, sur les grandes pandémies fictives et réelles et surtout sur celle que nous avons tous vécue, la COVID-19. L’histoire et la littérature se nourrissent et se réfléchissent mutuellement et *La Peste* d’Albert Camus nous a montré, à travers cette analyse, que le roman est non seulement un miroir mais qu’il pourrait assumer une fonction cathartique et prophétique. Victor Hugo se disait « l’écho sonore » de son temps, car la voix de l’écrivain est la voix de l’humanité. Quand l’écrivain se tait, l’humanité s’endort. Ainsi prions-nous nos écrivains de s’engager de plus en plus dans les actions sociales pour maintenir la population en éveil

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Lexical Innovation: An Analysis of Onomastics in Nigerian Political Discourse

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Abstract

In Nigeria, political communication is enriched by unique vocabulary used as names to set a stage for political engagements. This research investigates certain lexical innovations adopted by politicians during electioneering campaigns. It also identifies and discusses distinct political onomastics used by four prominent Nigerian politicians. These prominent politicians include Atiku Abubakar, Bola Ahmed Tinubu, Peter Obi, and Rabiun Kwankwaso. The study employs Pavol Stekauer's (1998) Onomasiological theory to analyze the data and discuss word formation processes prevalent in political gatherings. The analysis revolves around two main perspectives: the standpoint of politicians who devise special names to showcase their influence and power, and the perspective of the public who create names associated with power to align themselves with political figures and signify their support for them. The findings reveal that politicians use certain coined heroic names and flamboyant terms for self-identification, party affiliation and to influence their audience. It is also revealed that the party supporters on their part call prolific names to be identified with political actors and to indicate their support for them. Therefore, this study concludes that during political activities in Nigeria, communication that exists between the politicians and the electorates is characterised by distinct linguistic elements which are used to persuade, criticize, draw the attention of the electorates and to promote their choicest party ideologies. The study suggests further research on the pragmatic effects of political onomastics on voters.

Keywords: Onomastics, political discourse, lexical innovation, Nigerian politics

Introduction

Politics is a game characterised by the acts of struggle to clinch political office and to retain that office. To be endorsed and gain political power, political candidates adopt foregrounded or manipulative linguistic patterns to win the minds of the target audience or electorates. They often employ linguistic tactics like repetition, metaphors, and allusions to create persuasive narratives. For instance, during such political campaigns, a candidate repeatedly used the phrase “The Only Man that Understands the Needs of Nigerians” to create a sense of optimism and promise among voters. The language of politics conglomerates with the linguistic terms used in governance and their linguistic apparatuses. This implies that the linguistic apparatuses adopted describe how language is used in a socio-political environment to win the minds of people for support or to garbage their ideologies. The linguistic elements deployed focus on persuading or convincing the masses to view the political ideologies of politicians in their quest for power with similar ideological lenses.

According to Beard (2000), the term 'campaign' references the intense battle politicians face in their quest for power. To win this political battle, politicians employ strategic linguistic tactics to restore hope and convince the masses of their manifestos' value. Tse-Tung (1938) aptly puts "Politics is war without bloodshed, while war is politics with bloodshed." In a later interview on "The Coalition of Governance" (1945), Tse-Tung resolves that many people contribute to shaping world history through their writings, effectively fighting political wars with linguistic weapons, which he metaphorically calls "paper tigers".

Language, apart from being used for casual communication, serves as a potent tool for political control and manipulation. In the political arena, language is akin to live ammunition, capable of shaping public opinion and swaying political discourse. For instance, Ogolekwu's poem "NAIJATION AT 63" (2022) employs creative linguistic strategies, such as clipping ("NAIJA" & "NATION"), to convey a message that deviates from the norm. This study builds upon such examples, surveying the language of politics, its linguistic strategies, and political onomastics using the method of onomastology.

Review of Literature

Language Use in Political Communication

In Nigeria, political communication is fostered by the adoption of specialized vocabulary, polished as nomenclatures, to create a conducive atmosphere for political activities. Language plays a subtle yet crucial role in political activities, such as negotiating, debating, and wooing supporters in the political race. Kamalu & Iniworikabo (2016) observe language is used by political actors to establish trust and influence potential voters to embrace party manifestos. Furthermore, the language of communication in politics is systematically patterned to reflect the economic, social, and political disposition of the intended audience (Nkwede et al, 2017). Moreover, all human socio-political activities rely on linguistic apparatuses, and linguistic changes occur due to communicative constraints. Similarly, Ekpang & Odoemelam (2020, p. 92) assert that language is a dynamic concept that requires users to engage in semantic and stylistic creativity, making them creators of sorts.

According to them, this genetic base evolves from human social and political activities that view language as performing social functions. Language remains the cutting edge in all human activities (Ogolekwu, 2021, p.89), and as Ogolekwu states, it is the natural property of people, used for communication and identification. Language unites people with common goals together, especially in political scenes. Thus, Ogolekwu (2022) posits that language binds people together and in the same way, it unbinds them depending on its variations and usage (p.113). In their view, Nkwede et al (2017) maintain that in line with the political transitions in the nation, Nigeria which involves power fusion of

incumbency, there exists a rigid opposition party that mounts pressure to take over the power. Thus, use the language of political communication employed by the leadership of the previous opposition party to strategically conceive, nurture, and deliver the citizens. They observe that political language is used in communication to influence the target audience.

Omozuwa & Ezejideaku (2008) are of the view that politicians worldwide uniquely use language to add force and effect to their message, aiming to win votes (p.40). Political language involves adopting various linguistic strategies to persuade, idolize, brainwash, counterattack, and influence the psyche of electorates, ultimately seeking political power. While this language may not solely aim to manufacture frivolous promises, it serves as an emotion-booster and personal orientation. In political communication, specific languages are used to convey credibility and meaning to information intended for public consumption (Nkwede et al., 2017). Owuamalam and Nnaemeka (2015) note that words are coined in different styles or forms as political languages to achieve targeted objectives. The language used in Nigerian political campaigns is a blend of jargon, dialects, slogans, coinages, and loan words, strategically adopted to influence and flavor the electorates, garnering their support.

Based on the foregoing, it is evident that language in the political domain is distinguished by specific lexical features designed to capture the conscious and subconscious minds of electorates. Politics is, indeed, a game of strategic language use, where communicating political ambitions effectively is crucial for gaining political support. In a democratic system, the language of politics is primarily aimed at persuading, enticing, and wooing voters during elections. As Sajjad, Malghnai & Khosa (2018) aptly observe, language plays a vital role in shaping social realities and constructing political identities, which are then projected onto a larger cultural canvas. By recognizing language's significance in building social and political realities, we can better understand its impact on political communication.

Adeola & Muhyideen (2020) affirm that political leaders distinctively employ language to add extra-linguistic impact and speech power to their messages, thereby achieving their political ambitions. Ekpang & Odoemelam (2020) conducted a study on Honourable Patrick Obahiagbon, a prominent Nigerian politician, and found that he adopts a unique lexicon and expressions in his socio-political communication. Their study reveals that Obahiagbon's speech style is characterized by the use of compound words, coinages, archaic words, loan registers, irregular collocations, alliterations, intertextuality, and grammatical and lexical deviations, all of which contribute to a distinct linguistic manner of expression on socio-political issues like corruption, violence, indolence, partiality, and inequality prevalent in the nation.

Undeniably, the preceding discussions reveal that language in the political domain is strategically employed to achieve political objectives. Politicians deliberately utilize persuasive language measures to convince electorates and garner votes. To remain relevant in the political landscape, politicians employ distinctive linguistic elements and rhetorical strategies to facilitate effective communication with their audience, ultimately enhancing their political influence.

Language Used in Political Communication

Political language is characterised by distinct coinages, dialectical formation, allusion, affixation, metaphors, slogans, emotive expression, rhetorical questions, competitive, and aggressive or insulting lexicons (Bull, 2015; McNair, 2017). Distinct coinages offer a creative gateway to form novel words or expressions tailored to specific communicative goals (Velasco, 2009; Munat, 2015). Through coinage, innovative lexical items are crafted, enabling effective and unique communication that fosters understanding and connection between individuals. Politicians like K.O. Mbadiwe in the

2nd Republic have introduced notable coinages, including "accord," "Concordia," "man of timber and caliber," "juggernaut," "political heavyweight," and "political bride." Since the advent of multiparty politics, coinages have proven essential in political communication, effectively persuading, building trust, and motivating the electorate during election seasons (Abdullahi-Idiagbon & Olaniyi, 2011) (p.79). In their study, Abdullahi-Idiagbon and Olaniyi (2011) point out political coinages such as "Maradona", "no go area", "419", and "step aside" as coinages prominent during the regime of President Babangida. They further state that "Babangida was nicknamed Maradona because of the manner of his rulership" (p.83). Zailani (2019) notes that language users engage in coinages to fulfill their communicative needs by creatively modifying existing words. In the political sphere, politicians strategically select coined lexical items to create a comic atmosphere, alleviating tension and providing relief to the audience in a highly charged political climate. By doing so, they skillfully harness the power of language to connect with their audience and achieve their persuasive goals.

The strategic use of language in politics is further enriched by the deployment of code-switching and mixing. This phenomenon involves combining native lexical elements with other languages to create comic and emotive expressions, adding depth and nuance to political communication. Heller (2020) astutely observes code-switching is a pivotal interactional moment that sheds light on the language of politics, and its significance can only be fully grasped when considered within the larger framework of language practices. This is particularly essential in political contexts, where language is often used to persuade, convince, and connect with diverse audiences. Unarguably, in grassroots political campaigns, politicians frequently adopt code-mixing, blending native dialects with standard language to establish a rapport with their audience and showcase their roots. Some politicians employ distinctive dialectal formations to identify with the masses and demonstrate their linguistic competence. According to Omozuma & Ezejideaku (2010), politicians utilize these linguistic strategies to persuade voters by presenting themselves as the most capable candidates (p. 40). However, Ikeke (2021) contends that the use of ethnic or native linguistic elements in political campaigns in Nigeria can be seen as contradictory and exploitative, highlighting the complexities and potential pitfalls of language use in politics (p. 1). By examining the role of code-switching and mixing in political language, we can gain a deeper understanding of the intricate dynamics at play in political communication.

During political campaigns, politicians strategically employ various linguistic codes, ranging from dialects to English or pidgin, to (re)present their origin or nativized affiliation. These codes are prominently featured in their expressions, serving several functions. Holmes (2001) notes that code-mixing enables politicians to show solidarity, express group identities (such as tribes), create distance, discuss specific topics, convey emotions, and engage in rhetoric, as well as borrow terms from other languages. Similarly, Olumuyiwa (2013) observed in his study of political billboards in Ondo State that code switching, and code mixing are common phenomena used to cater to the diverse linguistic needs of the majority, who have limited proficiency in English. Politicians in the state leverage this strategy in political advertising on billboards, acknowledging the importance of linguistic adaptability in connecting with their audience.

In multilingual nations like Nigeria, language users in political contexts often seek to showcase their linguistic proficiency to display their identities and nativity. This is particularly true for politicians seeking power, who aim to leverage language to garner widespread support. Opeibi (2008) notes that "language is at the center of political mobilization, especially in multilingual contexts where minority and majority languages coexist" (p. 97). To mobilise a multitude of supporters, politicians require innovative linguistic strategies that can effectively connect with diverse audiences.

Affixation is a valuable linguistic resource that politicians leverage to enrich their communication during political campaigns. By adding prefixes or suffixes to roots or stems, politicians can create new terms that convey nuanced ideas, tone, and attitude. This skillful use of affixation not only creates vivid and memorable language but also showcases their linguistic competence, projecting intelligence, sophistication, and authority. Through affixation, politicians can convey complex ideas, values, and identities in a way that resonates with their audience, making their messages more engaging, persuasive, and impactful. Ekpang & Odoemelam (2020) investigate the special linguistic apparatus adopted by Patrick Obahiagbon. In their study, they observed that “although he was very vocal during deliberations in the House of Representative, Obahiagbon is known within the Nigerian sphere for his use of complex grammatical expressions when he deploys in political and social discourse” (p.70). In one of the instances of affixation, the aforementioned politicians used words such as “mobocracy”, kakistocracy”, “kikistomoplutocracy”. The linguistic creation of many politicians has shown that using affixation as morphemes to extend words for optimal representation and meanings is also part of political persuasion and act of seeking people’s support during electioneering campaigns. This is to say, that some existing words are given prominence just for the sake of communicative effects.

Politicians strategically employ a range of figurative expressions to enrich their speeches, making them more engaging, memorable, and impactful (Beard, 2000; Carver & Pikalo, 2008; Křivský, 2011; Mammadov and Mammadov, 2014; Mocanu, 2015). By leveraging metaphors, similes, allusions, hyperbole, personification, repetition, anaphora, epistrophe, alliteration, and imagery, politicians create vivid comparisons, evoke emotions, and establish connections with their audience. These rhetorical devices help politicians explain complex ideas, add emphasis, create humor, and inspire their listeners. By skillfully using figurative language, politicians can establish their authority, credibility, and style, making their speeches more effective and memorable. Through this strategic use of language, politicians can persuade, motivate, and resonate with their audience, achieving their rhetorical goals. Omozuwa and Ezejideaku's (2008) reveal through their study that some Nigerian politicians frequently cite biblical references in their speeches to sway public opinion and garner votes for themselves or their political parties. The researchers attribute this strategy to the high religious affinity of Nigerians, who place great value on spiritual authority. By invoking biblical references, politicians seek to lend spiritual credibility to their messages, appealing to the faith and values of their audience. This tactic effectively resonates with the religious sentiments of the Nigerian populace, making their speeches more persuasive and influential.

Political onomastics

Onomastics is the linguistic study of names and their etymologies, encompassing various fields like linguistics, philosophy, anthropology, ethnography, history, and philology (Algeo, & Algeo, 2000; Ainiala, 2008; Karpenko, 2014). However, with particular reference to linguistics, the field examines the names of individuals, objects, places, events, and statuses, as well as their origins (Clark, 1992; Bright, 2003; Hough, 2014; Babayev, 2022). Political onomastics is a subset of onomastics that focuses on the study of political nomenclatures and their social-linguistic origins. This includes investigating the names of political parties, which are peculiar linguistic usages that significantly impact communication, particularly during political campaigns (Ebeogu, 1993; Alia, 2006; Butler, 2010; Ojebode & Adeyeye, 2019). In the realm of political onomastics, names play a crucial role in communication, and understanding their etymological significance is essential for effective political messaging.

Nicknames as Means of Political Identities and Influences

In political circles, nicknames hold significant power in defining identity and influence among political actors. Nicknames offer a degree of flexibility in manipulating naming conventions, indicating group membership and social status (Klerk & Bosch, 1999). They uniquely identify individuals, often based on popularity, and are crucial in understanding power dynamics among politicians. Lamidi & Aboh (2021) note names can perform actions, and nicknames construct personal identity, reflecting collective self-representation. Nicknames are peculiar labels used to identify people, objects, events, or organizations, conveying identities and performing various functions in politics. They provide structural identity to political organizations, status, labels, slogans, and special name tags, distinguishing political membership, status, personalities, and goals from opponents. Nicknames play a vital role in political communication, often carrying symbolic meaning and influence.

Theoretical Framework

This paper is anchored on the Onomasiological framework developed by Pavol Stekauer in 1998. Stekauer presents a model for the intricate challenge of English word formation. The emphasis is on the process of coining new naming units (words). This is described by an onomasiological model which takes as its point of departure the naming needs of a speech community and proceeds through conceptual reflection of extra-linguistic reality and semantic analysis to the form of a new naming unit. As a result, it is the form which implements options given by semantics by means of the so-called Form-to-Meaning Assignment Principle.

Word-formation is conceived of as an independent component, interrelated with the lexical component by supplying it with new naming units, and by making use of the word-formation bases of naming units stored in the Lexicon. The Onomasiological theory is applied in this work to x-ray certain nomenclatures used by politicians to address the electorates during electioneering campaigns.

In the Nigerian context, the theory is used to explore the creation and impact of political nicknames, including their reflection on public perceptions and attitudes, and the linguistic and cultural factors influencing their adoption. The theory helps in the analysis of linguistic cum communication strategies adopted by politicians during public speeches. This framework, grounded in linguistics, explores how individuals and groups choose and employ names to convey specific meanings, create identities, and influence perceptions.

Methodology

The current study is corpus-assisted onomastics (CAO), hence, the corpora employed as data were obtained from online newspapers which are: Daily Newspaper, Punch Newspaper, pictures of billboards, and social media such as nairaland. The study is limited to only five reputable politicians in Nigeria. They are: Atiku Abubakar, Peter Obi, Bola Ahmed Tinubu, Rabiul Kwankwaso and Samuel Ortom.

However, the analysis of the data is achieved through Milles and Huberman's (1994) steps for qualitative data analysis. These include data reduction, data verification, and data display. This means the prominent areas are excerpted, verified, and displayed in tabular format to ease the analysis.

Table

S/N	POLITICAL ASPIRANTS	POLITICAL PARTIES	NUMBER OF POSTERS
1	Atiku Abubakar	PDP	2
2	Peter Obi	LP	4
3	Bola Ahmed Tinubu	APC	4
4	Rabiu Kwankwaso	NNPP	1
	Total		11

Analysis of the Data

Corpus 1:



The term "ATIKULated" is derived from the name of the People's Democratic Party's presidential candidate, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar. The suffix "-late" or "-lated" is added to form the verb "Atikulate" (present tense) or "Atikulated" (past tense), meaning "to strategize" (Twitter.ng by Amani). As the former Vice President of Nigeria and flagbearer for the 2019 and 2023 presidential elections, Atiku Abubakar adopted this name to communicate his strategies, approaches, and plans to his supporters. The term gained widespread popularity in both print and social media as his supporters embraced it to show solidarity and identify themselves as members of the party. Through this clever coinage, Atiku Abubakar effectively branded his campaign and fostered a sense of community among his supporters.

In political communication, name has the ability to make or mar, reform or deform and project or decline public attention and awareness towards candidates' capacity to promote national interest or to cause division that will dwindle the state of the nation. This is because the choice of linguistic elements used can rebuild or destroy personal reputation and integrity.

Corpus 2:



As shown in Corpus 2, the term "OBIdient" has its roots in the surname of the Labour Party's presidential candidate, Peter Obi. The name is derived by adding the suffix "-dient" to Obi, transforming it into an adjective that describes his followers and supporters. This etymological analysis reveals how the nickname "OBIdient" was coined to identify and characterise the group of people who supported and identified with Peter Obi's political ideology and campaign and to promote his political agenda, objectives, and garner support for his presidential bid. The term was utilised in public discourse to evoke an emotional and persuasive response from the target audience, swaying them to vote for his candidacy. The name "OBIdient" gained widespread popularity as supporters prominently displayed it on billboards, showcasing its ideological significance in a grand and impactful manner. This clever use of language and branding played a crucial role in creating a sense of identity, community, and momentum around Peter Obi's political campaign.

The lexical creativity continues with Peter Obi's running mate, Yusuf Datti Baba-Ahmed, as his name is transformed into a semantic novelty - "Yusful" - implying usefulness. This clever play on words is showcased on a poster with the caption "Let's be 'Obedient' and 'Yusful'", urging supporters of the Obi-Datti Movement to remain resolute in their quest for a new Nigeria, driven by the youth. By coining "Yusful" from Yusuf, the campaign creates a sense of purpose and utility, aligning with the movement's goals. This linguistic innovation inspires supporters to embrace the values of obedience and usefulness, fostering a sense of community and shared vision. The first caption, "Let us PETERIZE Nigeria", is an imperative, urging people to act and join the movement to transform the country. It's a call to action, encouraging people to be part of the change.



The political posters' captions, "Let us PETERIZE Nigeria" and "I am OBIFIED", showcase lexical vivacity and creativity by transforming the proper nouns, "Peter" and "Obi" into verbs with the suffixes "-ize" and "-ied". These linguistic innovations convey the idea that Nigeria needs to be transformed, revitalized, and energized, implying a desire for dynamic leadership and effective governance. By verifying "Peter", and "Obi", the campaign highlights the need for action, hard work, and a new trajectory for the country, implicitly critiquing the performance of previous leaders since Nigeria's return to democracy. This creative expression resonates with the aspirations of many Nigerians, seeking a brighter future for their nation. While the first caption is imperative and urges some form of action, the second is declarative in is used to show some resoluteness about the supporters' choice of candidate.



people to
native, and

Corpus 3:



The coinages "BATing", "BATist", "BATified", "BATtalion", and "BATism" are creative linguistic formations derived from the acronym "BAT", representing Bola Ahmed Tinubu's name. These terms have promoted, influenced, and identified APC supporters, showcasing enthusiasm and solidarity. "BATing" is a nuanced form of "bad thing", utilising syncope to create a shorter pronunciation. "BATist" is a noun, denoting a supporter or promoter of Tinubu, while "BATified" functions as both a verb and adjective, indicating support and tagging one's allegiance to the candidate. Finally, "BATism" is a noun, representing Tinubu's ideological vision. By leveraging syncope and suffixes, the campaign generated a distinctive linguistic style that resonates with its audience, creating a sense of community and identity among supporters.



The posters exemplify a fascinating manifestation of lexical creativity in political discourse, leveraging acronyms and compounding to convey meaningful messages. The first poster's utilisation of "BAT" as an acronym derived from Bola Ahmed Tinubu's initials demonstrates a strategic employment of linguistic abbreviation. Furthermore, the second poster's compounding of "BAT" with "man" and "returns" to evoke the iconic Batman film exemplifies a creative appropriation of cultural references. This rhetorical strategy not only underscores the candidate's courageous and strategic persona but also highlights his enigmatic and elusive nature, thereby meriting critical analysis in the context of political communication and linguistic creativity.

Corpus 4

The etymology of "Kwankwasiyya" can be traced back to the candidate's name, Kwankwaso, which is a clever play on words to create a sense of identity and allegiance among his supporters. The suffixes "-iyya" and "-ious" are used to describe the collective efforts and shared values of the movement, emphasizing the idea of building together and promoting a sense of community. By using these terms, the campaign aims to create a sense of belonging and shared purpose among its supporters, ultimately gaining popular support for the party's ideologies and increasing the chances of winning the presidency.

Findings

This study has investigated the role of political onomastics in word formation using five renowned politicians who are: Rabi'u Kwankaso (National New People Party), Bola Ahmed Tinubu (APC presidential candidate), Atiku Abubakar (PDP presidential candidate), Peter Obi (LP presidential candidate), and the former Governor of Benue State, Samuel Ortom. As discussed above, the role of political onomastics is realised through the use of coinages, affixations, and compound words. Some instances identified in the discussion include Atikulated, Obedient, BATified, BATist and BATism, Kwankwasiyya.

Findings show that these names are used to create an emotive effect in both the politicians and the electorates. It is revealed that politicians apportion heroic names for themselves to persuade, convince, and win the target audience's mind. It is revealed that the party supporters on their part call prolific names to be identified with political actors and to indicate their support for them. This study reveals that these names are used to project their political Influence, party membership, and ideologies as well as using those erected names to persuade the target audience for support during elections. Names as used to convey the message of politics have the capacity to express the speaker's thoughts and provide their ideological orientation to listeners.

Conclusion

This study has identified two views points at which political onomastics is analysed: first, from the viewpoint of the politicians who recreate special names to show how influential and powerful they are; secondly, from the viewpoint of the masses who create power-related names to identify themselves with the political actors and to indicate their supports for them. The findings reveal that politicians adopt

heroic
self-

linguistic
identified
protect

This is



certain nomenclatures using coinages, affixation, and compound words for identification, party membership, and recognition.

Politicians subtly deploy certain elements as nomenclatures to be with the most powerful elites or to their personal or social stratification. expressed through the bearing of high-

sounding coined names. Therefore, this study concludes that during political activities in Nigeria, communication that exists between the politicians and the electorates is characterised by distinct

linguistic elements which are used to persuade, criticize, draw the attention of the electorates and to promote their choicest party ideologies.

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Language Change: Discursive Strategies in *The Guardian* and *Vanguard* Newspapers Reportage of 2023 General Election in Nigeria

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Abstract

The 2023 Nigerian general election reportage in print media discourse generated coinages and other linguistic variants that are non-existent in the current English lexicon. The investigation of these coinages and discursive strategies are worthy of scholarly attention. Previous linguistic studies examined the discursive patterns of campaign songs, slogans, hate speech and propaganda with scant attention on language. Therefore, this study explored language change and the discursive strategies in the news print media reportage of the 2023 general elections. Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) theory and Robert Entman's framing concept served as the theoretical frameworks. A qualitative research method approach was employed. Data was extracted from the e-copies of two widely circulated newspapers in Nigeria: *The Guardian*, and *Vanguard*. Key findings revealed an extensive use of rhetoric devices, including the emergence of neologisms such as "atikulated," "Obidient," "BAT," and "Jagaban" that have evolved into political ideologies in the light of Norman Fairclough's CDA using rhetoric devices as analytical tools. The study concluded that there are linguistic changes in media reportage of the 2023 Nigerian general election as there are new concepts, and new lexical items created and recreated to express new ideologies. The study also contributed to the linguistic inventory of the Nigerian political discourse thereby gaining global prominence

KeyWords: Discursive strategies, 2023 election, Language change, Print media reportage, Political discourse,

Introduction

1. Language Change and Discursive Strategy

Language change and discursive strategies in election media reportage form a dynamic and multidisciplinary field situated at the intersection of linguistics, media studies, political science, and communication studies. The discursive strategies involved in election coverage include examining how journalists frame stories, utilize rhetoric, and employ persuasive techniques to shape public perception and opinion. Van Dijk, (1998), examined language use and communication techniques in election reporting and their impact on public opinion, political discourse, and democratic processes.

Oyeleye and Osisanwo (2013) conducted a study on the discourse pattern in the media report of the 2003 and 2007 elections in Nigeria, arguing that changes in society necessitate new processes of interpretation and perception of ideologies from different media perspectives.

The research on discursive strategies in election reportage traces its roots back to the development of mass media in the 20th century. The advent of newspapers, radio, television, and digital media platforms for disseminating election news and analysis has transformed the conveyance of political messages to the public; McChesney, (1999). Language use in election reporting often intersects with issues of bias and objectivity. Media organizations navigate the balance between impartial reporting and editorial bias, which can influence the public perception of candidates and political ideologies; Entman, (2012); Oyeleye & Osisanwo, (2013). Language itself is not static and continually evolves due to sociocultural changes, technological advancements, and shifting political landscapes. Researchers have examined how linguistic changes in media reporting reflect broader societal shifts, such as changes in gender dynamics, political ideologies, and public sentiment; Fairclough, (2000).

The role of communication is crucial in political discourse, as emphasized by McChesney (2000), who posits that the political economy of communication should be dominant in all communication programs. He perceives communication as vital in the media information subfield, suggesting that media communication is on the path to irrelevance if not rescued. The study of language change in election media reportage is closely linked to political communication research: political actors, including candidates and campaign teams, strategically use language in media communication therefore, allowing space for adaptation and diversity is essential.

The Nigerian News media discourse plays a critical role in election discourse, elections in Nigeria are highly competitive, and often marked by complex political dynamics, including regional, ethnic, and religious factors, understanding the role of the media in this context is crucial for assessing the quality of democratic process and political participation; Ogunleye, (2012)

The genre of Nigerian election News Media discourse possesses distinct characteristics marked by unique features that mirror the diverse political landscape, intricate socio-cultural dynamics, and the continuously evolving media environment in the country. These distinctive elements significantly influence how the Nigerian public engages, absorbs, and comprehends information related to elections. Noticeable shift is evident in the reporting style of Nigerian news. The linguistic diversity in Nigeria has prompted an adaptation in language within the country's news media reportage.

A noticeable shift is evident in the reporting style of Nigerian news. The linguistic diversity in Nigeria has prompted an adaptation in language within the country's news media reportage. Although English remains the predominant language in Nigerian news media, journalists frequently integrate local languages and employ code-switching or code-mixing strategies to resonate with various ethnic groups and regions. This linguistic adaptation aims to enhance understanding and engage a broader audience

during election coverage. With the rise of digital platforms and social media, news media outlets in Nigeria have experienced language change in their reporting of elections. Online communication platforms allow for more informal and colloquial language use, which has affected how news is disseminated and consumed. Journalists use emojis, internet slang, and other digital language elements to engage with younger audiences and facilitate political discussions. Understanding language change and discursive strategies in election media reportage is crucial for media literacy as it empowers the public to critically assess news coverage, discern biases, and make informed decisions during elections; Livingstone & Van Convening, (2003).

The researcher looked closely at the work of Chadwick (2017), corroborated by Opeibi and Adedeji (2020) stance on political media discourse and technology where they posited that technology-mediated communication, an emerging trend in online language use has enabled language users to become producers and consumers of online discourse products. Computational linguistics and data analytics have become essential tools for studying language change in election reporting. Natural language processing techniques analyse large datasets of media content, enabling them to identify linguistic patterns and trends; Diakopoulos (2016); Ogbulogo, (2020). The processing of data presentation with the use of electronics or computers is digitisation which is relevant in hybrid media logic as posited by Chadwick (2017).

The intersection of language change and Nigerian elections offers a compelling area for exploration. The dynamics of language change within the context of Nigerian election discourse present an intriguing avenue to examine how linguistic shifts reflect and influence the broader socio-political landscape

The research provides valuable insights into the dynamic relationship between language, politics, and society. It offers an opportunity to understand how linguistic adaptations in election discourse contribute to the construction of political narratives, influence public opinion, and shape the democratic process in Nigeria.

This study therefore carried out the discursive strategies deployed by the Nigeria news media on the 2023 general election reportage examining the social-semantic influence of language change phenomena on the Nigerian News Media discourse, its consequences on meaning interpretation to users of English as a second language as well as its effect on the audience.

The analysis considered the various elements, including the framing of political issues, the construction of political identities, the use of persuasive techniques, and the role of media in shaping public perceptions. The study encompasses different linguistic aspects, such as the use of metaphors, narratives, slogans, and other rhetorical devices, to uncover the nuances and strategies embedded in political communication and also investigate multilingualism and code-switching in the Nigerian Media discourse of the 2023 general election reportage.

. The analytical tools used to determine the discursive pattern are: Neologism, Multilingualism Propaganda, Metaphorical and proverbial expression, Phrases and slogans, lexical expansion, Code-switching and Mixing and Figurative expressions.

2. Discursive Strategies in Political Communication

Discursive strategies in political communication are dynamic and multifaceted, shaping the contours of democratic discourse. The synthesis of framing, agenda-setting, rhetoric, and critical discourse analysis provides a comprehensive lens through which researchers can untie the complexities of political language use. As political landscapes evolve, ongoing scholarly inquiry into discursive

strategies remains essential for understanding the changing dynamics of political communication. Osisanwo (2020) examined political communication strategies and he identified allusion (historical, religious, socio-cultural), propaganda, indigenous/native language usage and code alternation, reference to collective ownership, figurative/proverbial expressions, adaptation of common musical tune, and rhythmicity.

Also, rhetorical strategies are inherent in political communication, encompassing techniques such as persuasion, ethos, logos, and pathos. Aristotle's classical rhetorical concepts remain relevant, with modern scholars like Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969) and Burke (1969) expanding our understanding of how politicians strategically use language to persuade and mobilize constituents. The role of media in disseminating political discourse cannot be overstated. Research by Hallin and Mancini (2004) and Esser (2013) delves into the mediatization of politics, exploring how media platforms, journalistic practices, and technological advancements influence the discursive strategies employed by political actors.

The advent of social media has transformed political communication, introducing new discursive strategies. Research by Bennett and Segerberg (2012) investigates how social media platforms amplify political messages, provide new channels for political expression, and reshape the dynamics of political discourse.

While discursive strategies in political communication are rich areas of study, challenges persist, including issues of misinformation, polarization, and the ethical use of language in political discourse. Future research should continue to explore evolving communication technologies and their impact on political language, as well as the ethical considerations surrounding discursive strategies in contemporary political contexts.

3. Theory and Method

A qualitative method of analysis was used as a measuring tool for this research. The qualitative approach looked at the effectiveness of the intended meaning communicated in the Nigerian News media reportage. Corpus was collected from The *Guardian* and *Vanguard Newspaper* reportage of the Nigerian election, spanning from May 2022 to June 2023 to determine the discursive pattern of the 2023 media news reportage.

A purposive sampling technique was employed, selecting 50 clauses and sentences for analysis from selected newspapers headlines, news stories, editorials, articles and opinions. 40 quality data that aligned with the set objectives of the research was analysed from each of the selected newspapers. Data was also generated from sketch engine digital tools to further analyse language change and political slogans used in the 2023 general election in Nigeria.

Data was manually collected from each selected newspaper and tagged V and G which is the initial letter of each newspaper and the numerical number. The *Vanguard Newspaper* was tagged V1-V20 while the *Guardian Newspaper* was tagged G1-G20. The data was collected and analysed using Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) three-dimensional framework of text analysis, discourse practise and social- cultural practise. The text practise is based on the analysis of vocabulary, semantics, cohesion, and grammar. The present study deployed theory and structure of Norman Fairclough's CDA to investigate language change and the discursive pattern used in the 2023 Nigerian general election. In fulfilling this, rhetorical devices were used consisting of the following

analytical tools: Neologism: Newly coined words or expressions specific to a particular context or discourse, indicating emerging concepts or phenomena, Indigenous or native language usage, Propaganda; this has elements of persuasion, framing narratives, shaping perceptions, and influencing opinions within political discourse, Metaphorical and proverbial expression; Figurative language and expressions that convey intensity, success, strategies, and criticisms within political contexts, Phrases and slogans ; Memorable and impactful expressions used to capture attention, promote ideas, or emphasize specific themes, Lexical expansion; Broadening of word meanings beyond standard usage, introducing new nuances or connotations within discourse, Code-switching and Mixing; Alternation or blending of languages or linguistic elements within discourse, reflecting cultural fusion or diversity and lastly Figurative expressions; parallel structures, satire, repetition, and irony to add depth and nuances to political narratives.

4. Analysis and Discussion of Data

The focus of analysis is to identify the discursive strategies deployed by the Nigerian news media in the 2023 general election reportage as evidenced in *The Guardian* and *Vanguard* Newspapers using the following analytical tools: Neologism, Multilingualism, Propaganda, Metaphorical and proverbial expression, Phrases and slogans, Lexical expansion, Code-switching and Mixing, and Figurative expressions.

4.1 Neologism: These are newly coined words or expressions specific to a particular context or discourse, indicating emerging concepts or phenomena. Neologism is usually used in political campaign as to develop political ideologies. New words, expressions and slogans evolved with the 2023 Nigerian general election. Words like "Obidients," "Atikulate," "Emilokan," "Olule," "awalokan", "Batified"

The Guardian Newspaper May, 8th 2023: Soyinka had in an interview accused supporters of Obi known as Obidients of fascism over their alleged attitude of seeing attacks on individuals on social media as their "badge of honour". The term "Obidients" in the context of the 2023 Nigerian general election can be analysed as a neologism. It is combination of "Obi" and "obedient," suggesting a group of supporters aligned with Obi, a political figure who is the presidential candidate of the Labour Party movement. This neologism also stands for new terms and expressions as they emerge to capture the political phenomena. In this case, "Obidients" indicate a sense of loyalty and adherence to the ideology of the "obidient" movement.

The Vanguard, 14th, April, 2023: "Like a wild harmattan fire, Obi's emergence is reawakened many youths and others across the country who pride themselves as 'Obidients' with a vow to recover Nigeria from corrupt leaders".

The term "Obidients" is a neologism, a newly coined word. It is formed by combining "Obi" the surname of the Labour party presidential candidate with the suffix "dients," suggesting a group of people who align themselves with Obi and his principles. This neologism contributes to a sense of identity and community among Obi's supporters. "Obidient" also represents a political ideology as recognised by Norman Fairclough's critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). CDA recognizes that discourse is not just about communication but also about shaping and maintaining social ideologies. The term "Obidient" carries specific connotations and meanings within its political context, reflecting underlying ideologies and beliefs.

4.2. Multilingualism: This is the incorporation of indigenous or foreign language elements into discourse, reflecting cultural and linguistic diversity. Data from *The Vanguard Newspaper*, October 22, 2022: "The PDP Presidential Candidate, acted the 'emilokan' script by insisting on running for Presidency despite the tacit zoning arrangement his party has practiced since its inception".

The responsibility for the candidate's actions is attributed to the candidate, framing them as the active agent who "acted the 'emilokan' script." "emilokan" has a cultural reference which help in perception of the intended message of the communicator. The PDP presidential candidate, Atiku is said to act the "emilokan" (I am next in line) script, the presidency has been zoned to the Southwest, Atiku, a Fulani man still contested the election with a strong resolve to win despite the zoning formula.

The Guardian Newspaper, 4th June 2023: "Gullible followers, and unrepentant enablers 'hallelujahing and salaming' their GOs in their synagogues of lies and deceit".

The terms "hallelujahing" and "salaming" introduce a religious element into the text, indicating a form of multilingualism by incorporating terms associated with religious practices 'hallelujah' used by the Christians to praise their God and 'salam alaikum' by the Muslims as a form of greetings into the discourse. The phrase introduces new verbs ("hallelujahing" and "salaming") in a political and critical context, creatively describing actions and behaviours of politicians who are hero worshipped by gullible followers.

V13. *Vanguard Newspaper*, Sept. 15 2022: "Crowd like this is arranged but if the crowd is Obidients, it is organized love even on Mondays. Unna de funny."

The term "Obidients" is non-English and is derived from "obi", the surname of one of the presidential candidates in the 2023 general election. Its use introduces multilingualism into the text, reflecting a linguistic diversity beyond standard English.

4.3. Propaganda: Elements of persuasion, framing narratives, shaping perceptions, and influencing opinions within political discourse. There is evidence of propaganda in the Nigerian 2023 general election as demonstrated in the examples of data and explanation below. Strategic use of slogans like "The victory is ours" and "Only WE can stop us" aims to influence opinions, rally support, and establish a sense of unity among supporters.

The Guardian Newspapers, April 25, 2023: "We must also be vigilant against those who seek to use our differences to instigate a crisis. We must not allow ourselves to be used by the political class to achieve their selfish interests. We must stand together and resist any attempt to divide us.

The expression "stand together" and resistance against external manipulation "not allow ourselves to be used" are emotional appeals intended to evoke a sense of solidarity among the audience. It indirectly criticizes "those who seek to use our differences to instigate a crisis" and "the political class" as selfish actors who aim to divide the populace for their own gain. This sets up an "us vs. them" narrative, portraying the opposition of certain political entities as threats to national unity and stability. The discourse includes a call to action, urging people to be vigilant, stand together, and resist attempts at division. This call to action is a common feature in propaganda, as it seeks to mobilize individuals or groups towards a specific goal or ideology.

The Vanguard Newspaper, October 22, 2022: "The PDP Presidential Candidate, acted the 'emilokan' script by insisting on running for Presidency despite the tacit zoning arrangement his party has practiced since its inception".

The responsibility for the candidate's actions is attributed to the candidate, framing them as the active agent who "acted the 'emilokan' script." "emilokan" has a cultural reference which help in perception of the intended message of the communicator. The PDP presidential candidate, Atiku is said to act the "emilokan" (I am next in line) script, the presidency has been zoned to the Southwest, Atiku, a Fulani man still contested the election with a strong resolve to win despite the zoning formula. "obedient" "atikulat" and "batified" represent political ideologies as entrenched in Fairclough and Wodak (1997) tenets of Critical Discourse analysis

4.4. Metaphorical and Proverbial Expression: Figurative language and expressions that convey intensity, success, strategies, and criticisms within political contexts. There is the preponderance of metaphorical and proverbial expressions in the Nigerian 2023 general election reportage as evidenced in the data analysed below.

The Guardian Newspaper, April 25th, 2023: "The group will next month organise a three-day event to unveil the meteoric rise of Tinubu, his meritorious service, and his historical chronicle"

The phrase "meteoric rise" employs metaphorical language, comparing Tinubu's ascent to a meteor. This suggests rapid and impressive progress, contributing to the positive framing of his political journey. The phrase serves as a promotional slogan to unveil Tinubu, the presidential candidate of the APC, the event focused on celebrating and showcasing the achievements and history of Tinubu. It emphasizes Tinubu's qualities such as "meteoric rise," "meritorious service," and "historical chronicle," highlighting his perceived strengths and contributions.

Vanguard Newspaper, December 29th, 2022: "Currently, and exactly 58 days to the February 25, presidential election, the polity is turbo-charged".

The phrase "turbo-charged" is a hyphenated compound word that serves as a metaphor. This metaphorical expression implies a state of heightened energy, acceleration, or intensity. The use of "turbo-charged" suggests that the political atmosphere is not just active but is operating at an exceptionally high level of intensity or speed as it is compared with a turbo-engine. The term "polity" is an economic metaphor used to describe the political system or political organisation of a country. This choice of language adds a layer of formality and seriousness to the description, suggesting that the political environment is not just active but is a complex and structured system.

4.5. Phrases and Slogans: The media reportage of 2023 general election is replete with memorable and impactful expressions used to capture attention, promote ideas, or emphasize specific themes as analysed from data from the *Vanguard* and *The Guardian Newspaper*;

The Guardian Newspaper, February 20, 2023: "Apathy can no longer be a choice, just as last-minute fire brigade approach, can no longer be our choice."

The use of phrases and slogans like "last-minute fire brigade approach" captures specific behaviours, highlighting urgency or inefficiencies in political actions.

The Guardian Newspaper, April 25th, 2023: "The group will next month organise a three-day event to unveil the meteoric rise of Tinubu, his meritorious service, and his historical chronicle"

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The Vanguard, November, 23rd 2022: "The victory is ours. It is within sight and together we shall enter the Promise Land".

The victory is ours": This part emphasizes collective ownership of the impending success, fostering a sense of unity and shared purpose among supporters.

"Together we shall enter": This reinforces the idea of collective effort and solidarity, suggesting that success is a communal achievement. "It is within sight": This suggests that victory is imminent and tangible, creating a sense of urgency and encouraging supporters to continue their efforts. This phrase functions effectively within the discursive patterns of election reportage in Nigerian newspapers by employing a confident, unifying, and inspirational message that resonates with cultural and religious motifs, aiming to galvanize support and convey a sense of imminent triumph.

The Vanguard Newspaper Nov. 23rd 2022: "NNPP and Kwankwaso cannot stop us. Only WE can stop us and that must NEVER be allowed to happen. Like Iago said in Shakespeare's classic play 'Othello', 'it is in ourselves that we are thus or thus'".

"Only WE can stop us": This phrase emphasizes internal cohesion and the idea that the only real threat to success comes from within. It underscores the importance of unity and self-discipline among supporters. "That must NEVER be allowed to happen": This part reinforces the message by categorically rejecting the possibility of internal failure, urging supporters to stay united and focused. "Like Iago said in Shakespeare's classic play 'Othello', 'it is in ourselves that we are thus or thus'": The use of a quote from Shakespeare adds a layer of intellectual and cultural authority to the message. It implies that the wisdom of self-determination and internal strength is timeless and universal, this phrase operates effectively within the discursive pattern of election reportage in Nigerian newspapers by asserting dominance over external opposition, emphasizing internal unity, and invoking cultural and literary references to inspire and mobilize supporters.

4.6 Lexical Expansion: Broadening of word meanings beyond standard usage, introducing new nuances or connotations within discourse, the use of lexical expansion was prominent in the reportage of the 2023 Nigerian general election as evidenced below:

The Guardian Newspapers April 20, 2023: "It was the freest and the most authentic Nigeria had ever held; and that is despite the effort of the opposition to delegitimise the election.

The word "opposition" literarily mean resisting, the action of opposing, however in the political discourse, the use of "opposition" in the data G9, has expanded the meaning to mean political opponents.

The Guardian Newspaper, 4th June 2023: "Gullible followers, and unrepentant enablers 'hallelujahing and salaming' their GOs in their synagogues of lies and deceit".

The terms "hallelujahing" and "salaming" introduce a religious element into the text, indicating a form of multilingualism by incorporating terms associated with religious practices 'hallelujah' used by the Christians to praise their God and 'salam alaikum' by the Muslims as a form of greetings into the discourse. The phrase introduces new verbs ("hallelujahing" and "salaming") in a political and critical context, creatively describing actions and behaviours of politicians who are hero worshipped by gullible followers.

The Vanguard Newspaper May 10, 2023: "The time has come for the Stakeholders in the opposition and even the aggrieved ones in the ruling party to sheathe their sword and support the President-elect, Senator Bola Tinubu in building a virile nation".

The word "opposition" literally mean resisting, the action of opposing, however in the political discourse, the use of "opposition" in the data, has expanded the meaning to mean political opponents.

4.7 Code-switching and Mixing: Alternation or blending of languages or linguistic elements within discourse, reflecting cultural fusion or diversity, the Norman Fairclough's CDA emphasised the place of historical and cultural expression, the 2023 Nigerian general election had linguistic elements that reflected the culture of the people, code alternation is an evidence as culture is tied to language. Data from the Guardian and the Vanguard Newspapers.

The Guardian Newspaper, 4th June 2023: They must allow those of us in the diaspora who have japa-ed for greener pastures in foreign to start to sapa(da) back to Nigeria. The inclusion of Yoruba terms like "japa-ed" and "sapa(da)" demonstrates code alternation by switching to the Yoruba within an English sentence. This reflects a blending of English with local linguistic elements. The term "greener pastures" implies a perception of better opportunities abroad, while "sapa(da) back to Nigeria" suggests a desire to return or reconnect with Nigerian roots. Fairclough's CDA aligns ideological positions influence language use and discursive strategies in the discourse.

The Guardian Newspaper, March, 7 2023: "All the major democracies and their representatives have congratulated Oga Ahmed Tinubu".

The inclusion of the term "Oga" demonstrates code alternation by switching to a Nigerian honorific within an English sentence. This reflects a blending of standard English with a local linguistic element, emphasizing a sense of respect for authority.

The Guardian Newspaper, 23rd, February 2023: This line of thought is strong, especially when we consider the modus operandi for the accreditation of these journalists. The inclusion of "modus operandi" involves a subtle form of code alternation by incorporating a term from Latin into an English sentence. This reflects a blending of linguistic elements, demonstrating a certain level of complexity in expression.

Vanguard Newspaper Nov. 13th 2022: "Buhari went first; and instead of openly backing Emilokan for the job forced Asiwaju to fight for the ticket".

The text involves code alternation by seamlessly integrating English with Nigerian Yoruba language expression "Emilokan." And 'asiwaju' This blend of English and Nigerian terms is characteristic of code alternation and adds a cultural dimension to the text.

Vanguard Newspaper October 22, 2022: “It has even been adapted to ‘awalokan’ to make it more inclusive”.

The adaptation of "Emilokan" to "awalokan" involves code alternation, a linguistic adaptation to make the term more inclusive. This demonstrates a shift from the original term to a more inclusive version, possibly reflecting an effort to cater to a broader audience.

Vanguard Newspaper October 22, 2022: “It was in that speech that he referred to a sitting Governor as ‘eleyi’ meaning ‘this one’ literally in Yoruba”.

The inclusion of "eleyi" involves code alternation by switching to the Yoruba language within an English sentence. This demonstrates a blending of English and Yoruba, contributing to the code alternation in the text.

4.8 Figurative expressions: There is copious use of figurative expressions like satire, repetition, parallel structure from data presented below. Figurative expressions add depth and nuances to political narratives. By applying these analytical tools, we can discern linguistic innovations, persuasive strategies, cultural influences, and thematic emphases within the discursive landscape of the 2023 general election in Nigeria

Expressions like "turn-by-turn affair," "egged on by a crowd of supporters," and "building a virile nation" employ figurative language to describe political processes, support dynamics, and national development goals, respectively. The framing of candidates like "the PDP Presidential Candidate acted the 'emilokan' script" and the re-framing of terms like "awalokan" reflect attempts to shape perceptions, redefine narratives, and create positive associations with certain political figures or movements as evidenced below.

The Guardian Newspapers, April 25, 2023: “The group will next month organise a three-day event to unveil the meteoric rise of Tinubu, his meritorious service, and his historical chronicle”.

The parallel structure in this sentence lies in the series of items that follow the verb "organise":

“The meteoric rise of Tinubu, his meritorious service, his historical chronicle”

Each item in the series is structured similarly, with a possessive pronoun "his" followed by a descriptive noun phrase. This consistent structure creates a parallelism that makes the sentence clear and easy to understand, emphasizing the three aspects related to Tinubu that will be unveiled during the event.

The Guardian Newspapers, April 25, 2023: “We must also be vigilant against those who seek to use our differences to instigate a crisis. We must not allow ourselves to be used by the political class to achieve their selfish interests. We must stand together and resist any attempt to divide us”.

The repetition of the phrase "We must" is a rhetorical device known as anaphora. This repetition emphasizes a series of imperative actions, creating a sense of urgency and collective responsibility. The statement “We must also be vigilant” “We must not allow ourselves to be used” “We must stand together” use of parallel structure improved the readability of the sentence and lay emphasis on the message being communicated to the audience. The sentence follows a parallel structure in terms of

syntax and grammatical construction. This parallelism creates a rhythmic flow, making the statements more memorable and impactful.

The Guardian Newspaper May, 8th 2023: Soyinka had in an interview accused supporters of Obi known as Obidients of fascism over their alleged attitude of seeing attacks on individuals on social media as their “badge of honour”.

“Obi known as Obidients of fascism’: The word ‘Obi”, “Obidients” and “fascism” is satirical, the speaker describes obi’s supporters as obidients but fascist referencing obedience or adherence to the ideologies of the Labour party. This statement deride the followers of Obi who are called “obidients” who are accused of promoting or supporting fascist ideologies. The phrase "Obidients of fascism" is a satirical twist on the idea of blind obedience to fascist principles. The use of "badge of honour" in this context suggests a mocking tone, implying that these individuals or groups view criticism or attacks on social media as something to be proud of or celebrated, which is absurd and highlights the irony of their stance.

Vanguard Newspaper, December 29th, 2022: “Currently, and exactly 58 days to the February 25, presidential election, the polity is turbo-charged”.

"Turbo-charged" can also be seen as a form of hyperbole, exaggerating the intensity and energy of the political environment. It amplifies the impact of the metaphor and reinforces the idea of heightened activity and significance. The use of the exact number "58 days" provides numerical accuracy, generating a tangible and measurable depiction of the timeframe. This precision contributes to the overall credibility and specificity of the statement.

The Vanguard Newspaper, 14th, April, 2023: “Like a wild harmattan fire, Obi’s emergence is reawakened many youths and others across the country who pride themselves as ‘Obidients’ with a vow to recover Nigeria from corrupt leaders”.

“Obi’s emergence is reawakened”: The personification of Obi's emergence, inferring that it can be "reawakened," attributes human qualities to an abstract concept. This choice of language imbues Obi's emergence with urgency, suggesting that it has a life or force of its own that can be revitalized.

The Vanguard, November, 23rd 2022: “The victory is ours. It is within sight and together we shall enter the Promise Land”.

Allusion “we shall enter the Promise Land” this expression makes reference to the bible that talks about bringing the children of Israel to the land of promise, here the promise land refers to the political party fulfilling her political agenda.

5. Conclusion

The 2023 Nigerian general election and its reportage depicts evidence of language change through meaning reallocation, neologism, nuances, and semantic expansion such as *Obidients*, *Atikulated*, *Batified*, *Emilokan*, *Jagaban* became political ideology which is in line with Fairclough's Critical Discourse analysis (CDA) tenets. Meaning reallocation like "opposition" in the data, has expanded the meaning to mean political opponents. New lexical items like IREV, BVAS, nuance words like *emilokan*, and *eleyi*, have added to the inventory of political discourse in Nigeria.

The language change observed in media reportage exhibited a clear semantic framing, subtly influencing the interpretation of events. The selective use of words and phrases demonstrated a possible bias, which demands careful consideration when evaluating the objectivity of election coverage. Since language has the power potential to influence and shape public opinion, the newspaper reportages capture the elaborate assertive expressions, messages are framed such that the audience have a parochial perspective as the news is being presented in a manner that emphasizes certain local or immediate concerns of events which align with Entman's framing concept.

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Poor English Language Usage among Fresh Undergraduate Students in Nigerian North-East Universities: Causes and Solutions

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Abstract

Poor English language usage in both oral and written communication has been observed among Nigerian fresh university undergraduate students, especially in the North-East. While existing studies on English language usage in Nigeria have largely focused on its teaching and learning in secondary schools, little has been done on how to tackle the problem of poor English language usage among Nigerian fresh university undergraduate students in the North-East. Therefore, this paper examines the causes and problems associated with poor English language usage among fresh undergraduate students of Federal University, Gashua, and selected Universities in the North East. The paper also offers solutions to the identified causes and problems. The study adopted a quantitative research method and employed frequency and simple percentage in the analysis of data. Questionnaires were employed to elicit information from the respondents. 400 Fresh undergraduate students comprising both males and females, studying diverse courses were randomly selected from four North East universities---Federal University, Gashua, Federal University Kukari, Gombe State, Yobe State University and University of Maiduguri, Borno State. One hundred (100) respondents from each of the selected universities were selected. The data were analyzed using frequency and simple percentages. The results of the responses were tabulated, percentages computed and charts were used to show pictorial results. The study found that the majority of the respondents claimed that they were not exposed to items relating to learning of English language and usage of the English language in various communicative settings. While there were also respondents who indicated that they were exposed to such linguistic features. The results of the study showed that a larger percentage of respondents' lack of exposure to important aspects of English language learning and usage in various communicative settings was mainly responsible for poor usage of English language among fresh undergraduate students in the North-East. The study, therefore, recommends that language skills viz speaking, writing, reading, and listening should be given priority right from basic school as they help greatly in improving students' performance in the English language

Keywords: Communicative settings, English language usage, Fresh University undergraduate students, Language skills, North-East Universities.

Introduction

As stipulated in Nigerian Education policy, the English language is officially approved as the medium of instruction for students at the secondary school level up to tertiary institutions. In addition, it is an official Nigerian language adopted to be used in all government engagements and activities, in terms of official public communication and documentation. It is also the language used in public and private establishment recruitment processes. As such, Nigerian university students are under obligation to have mastery in their English language usage. However, poor English language usage in both oral and written communication has been observed among fresh university undergraduate students.

With the increase in the status of the English language, it has become an important tool without which many opportunities that are readily available to University undergraduate students can be fully maximized. Over the years, the English language has become a global language. It has become the language for government engagement and activities, job interviews, politics, commerce, mass media and more importantly, education. English language is a global language because of its functions all over the world. Oluwole, (2008:9) opines that “having difficulty in grasping fully the contents and concepts of the various subjects of the curriculum taught in target language seems to be one of the most serious problems that English as a first language students face in their particular course of study”. This might be due to their weaknesses in the English language (the medium of instruction) which may have negative consequences on their overall performance. This shows that poor English language usage or lack of mastery of the English language can equally lead to poor performance of students in their various courses of study.

Effective use of the English language is, therefore, non-negotiable for educated classes and students in general. Furthermore, apart from the fact that the English language is an official Nigerian language adopted to be used in all government engagements and activities, it is also the language approved as a medium of instruction for students at the secondary school level up to tertiary institutions in the Nigerian policy on education. As such, University students are under obligation to have a mastery in their English language usage. This is hinged on the fact that it is the language of the medium of instruction at the University level and also the language through which they are expected to communicate, write examinations, and interact with lecturers and other members of the University community. It is also the language through which interviews for job opportunities are conducted.

However, it has been observed that poor English language usage in both oral and written communication is a great problem among fresh University undergraduate students as existing studies have mostly focused on teaching and learning of English language to secondary school students. Hence, much has not been done on how to tackle the problem of poor English language usage among fresh undergraduate students of Universities in the North East. The paper therefore examines causes and problems associated with poor English language usage among fresh undergraduate students of Federal University, Gashua and selected Universities in the North East

Problem Statement

Existing studies on English language usage in Nigeria has largely focused on problems associated with teaching and learning of English language secondary school students and poor performance in English language among secondary school students. For instance, Adedokun (2011), Abdullahi (2003), Fema (2003), Mohammed (2002) and Ya'u (1993) with a focus on inadequate qualified English language teachers, teachers' attitudes towards innovation and use of instructional media, interference with mother tongue, negative attitudes of students towards learning English language and poor teaching method. In all, existing studies have largely explored causes of poor performance in English language as well as problems associated with teaching and learning of English language at the secondary school level. Much attention has not been given to causes of poor English language usage among fresh University undergraduates in North-East, Nigeria. Consequently, this study examines causes of poor English language usage among fresh undergraduate students in Nigerian Northeast Universities.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are to:

- (i) identify likely causes of poor English language usage among fresh undergraduate students of Federal University, Gashua and selected Universities in the North East of Nigeria.
- (ii) discuss how the identified causes have affected the students' ability to communicate effectively in English language; and
- (iii) recommend possible solutions to the identified causes and make recommendations.

Significance of the Study

It would help University management in the Northeast to make a well-informed decision on English language policy for the Universities. It would also be useful to education policymakers in Yobe State and other States in the Northeast. In addition, English language scholars who are interested in English language learning in the North-East would equally find the study helpful.

Second Language Acquisition and Language Learning

There are differences between the acquisition of a language and learning a language. Acquisition requires meaningful interaction in the target language (i.e. English) – natural communication - in which speakers are concerned not with the form of their utterances but with the messages they are conveying and understanding. The best method is to allow the supply of comprehensible and communicative inputs in low anxiety situations, containing messages

that are of interest to the students. Learning, on the other hand, refers to the formal classroom activity where language mediums are learned which involves the teaching of aspects of language drill (sounds and sstructure) and its assessment.

According to Krashen (1983:8), "Language acquisition does not require extensive use of conscious grammatical rules and does not require tedious drill". He added that, in real-world, conversations with sympathetic native speakers who are willing to help the acquirer understand are very helpful. Stephen Krashen identified five theories that are relevant to second language acquisition. These theories are:

(1) the Acquisition-Learning (2) the Monitor (3) the Natural Order (4) the Input (5) the Effective Filter hypothesis.

In the Acquisition-learning hypothesis, Krashen distinguishes between two systems of foreign language performance: ‘the acquired system’ and ‘the learned system’. The acquired system or acquisition is the subconscious process very similar to the one child undergoes when they acquire their first language. It requires meaningful interaction in the target language (i.e natural conversation), in which the speaker concentrates not on the form of their utterances, but, on the communicative processes. The learned system, on the other hand, is the product of formal instruction and it comprises a conscious process that results in conscious knowledge about language, for example, knowledge of grammatical rules. According to Krashen, the deductive approach in a teacher-centered setting produces ‘learning’ while an inductive approach in a student-centered setting leads to ‘Acquisition’. Krashen believes that ‘learning’ is less important than ‘acquisition’.

The monitor hypothesis according to Krashen, explains the relationship between acquisition and learning and denies the influence of learning over acquisition. The monitoring function is the practical result of the learned grammar. Krashen maintained that the acquisition system is the utterance initiator while the learning system performs the role of monitor or editor. The monitor acts in planning, editing, and correcting functions when some specific conditions are met:

- The second language learners have sufficient time at their disposal
- They focus on forms or think about the correctness
- They know the rules

The role of the monitor is to correct deviations from normal speech and give it a more polished appearance. Krashen added that there are individual differences among language learners with

Literature Review

This section presents some related scholarly perspectives to this study. Some of the related scholarly perspectives are hereby discussed. Usman, (2012) holds that Nigerian students are surrounded by a complex linguistic situation that forces them to learn their first indigenous language and they are required to have a good command of the English language. The Nigerian policy on education stressed the use of the immediate language of the community in instruction at the lower level of primary education and a combination of English and the language of the immediate community at the upper part of primary education. In other words, the policy recommended the use of the mother tongue in teaching at the primary level. This situation contributes immensely to poor learning of the English language right from primary school and it extends to secondary school. Fema, (2003) also opines that the major cause of the errors in English used by Nigerians can be attributed to the interference of the mother tongue with the English language. He adds that students often use their native language or mother tongue in all their interactions and English is only used within the four walls of the classrooms and ends there. According to him, the above situation clearly shows that the dominance of the mother tongue in the Azare metropolis contributed immensely to poor performance in the English language.

According to Adedokun (2011), inadequate qualified English language teachers can also cause poor performance in the English language in secondary schools. Due to the above-mentioned cause, in some schools, other subject teachers are forced to teach the English language, and some who even read it exhibit poor abilities in oral and written expression of it. Therefore, with this kind of situation, these teachers can never teach effectively and hence poor performances from their products. He is of the view that poorly trained English and untrained teachers (of English) were employed to teach and prepare secondary school students for the school certificate examinations in the English language. This situation contributed immensely to poor performance in the English language among secondary school students.

Roger (1981) regards inadequate infrastructural facilities and instructional media as another cause of poor performance in the English language in our secondary schools. Roger (1981) is of the view that instructional materials and facilities are an important part of the process of learning as they provide practice and feedback in the learning track. In our present-day secondary schools particularly public ones, students are in most cases sitting on the floor and windows during lessons. In some cases, students are living under trees or living in dilapidated classrooms. In addition to that even where there are enough classes, they are overcrowded and language laboratories are lacking. All these cannot allow for proper learning of the English language and other subjects hence leading to poor performance. Sa'ad (2007) was of the view that teaching and learning take place effectively when classes are moderate. However, the present-day Nigerian school classes are overpopulated with students over 120 and this cannot allow for proper teaching and learning. On the other hand, in the area of instructional resources or media, there is a dominance of textbooks, dictionaries, workbooks, and posters in the teaching of the English language in secondary schools in Nigeria. Modern media such as audio, video tapes, language laboratories, programmed texts, flashcards; computers, magazines, and newspapers are rarely used. Mohammed, (1998) observed that the teaching of the English language is bedeviled with many problems such as inadequate period of teaching, method of teaching, and lack of adequate and useful resources.

Abdullahi (2003) opines that another important cause of the poor performance of the English language in Nigerian secondary schools is the teachers' attitude towards innovation and the use of instructional media. Most Nigerian secondary school English language teachers fail to take into account the dynamic nature of the English curriculum but they continue to bore students with definitions and drills in grammar, vocabulary, and speech work. The traditional content or knowledge-oriented teaching is still very much practiced by them. Abdullahi (2003) is of the view that teachers mostly prefer to use traditional ways of teaching that they have been familiar with or as they were taught, which do not necessarily aid proper learning. Ya'u, (1993) categorically states that achievement of stated objectives in teaching and learning is always associated with using the right technique.

For Mohammed (2002), the negative attitude of students toward the learning of the English language is also associated with poor performance in the English language. Students, particularly in secondary and primary schools mostly show negative attitudes towards learning of English language because they consider it foreign or not theirs. He is of the view that most students put a kind of negative attitude toward learning and using of English language as well as making teachers' task difficult one indeed. It is obvious that for any student to be proficient in the English language, mastering skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing is necessary, and it requires hard work, and dedication from the students.

Ya'u (1993) also observes that improper use of methods of teaching also causes poor performance in the English language among secondary school students. Successful teaching and learning take place when the right teaching methods are used by the teachers. He believes that achievement of stated objectives in teaching and learning is always associated with using the right method. Sometimes, teachers of the English language do not consider the learners' age, the topic, the time, and the background of the learners in choosing the method to be used in teaching and this affects the level of learning of the students.

According to Ayodele (2004), the lack of textbooks has compounded the problem of teaching and learning of use of English in all tertiary institutions. Where the textbooks are available they are outdated. Most students depend on lecture notes only because of a lack of relevant textbooks. Many of them find it difficult to take lecture notes. Their lecture notes are full of spelling and grammatical errors which are indicative of the poor language background of the students (Ayodele, 2004).

From these scholarly perspectives, it can be seen that existing studies have mostly focused on the problems associated with poor use of the English language without much work on poor English language usage among University students, particularly fresh university undergraduate students. This proposed article fills this gap.

Methodology

Research Design and Instrumentation

A questionnaire-based approach was used in this study to examine the causes of poor English language usage among undergraduate students in Nigerian North-East Universities. A standardized self-reported questionnaire was developed and utilized to collect data. In addition to some basic demographic questions, the instrument included items on English language usage in various communicative settings. Participants who were undergraduate students of the selected universities in the Northeast were asked to answer questions relating to the frequent usage of the English language in certain communicative settings. A 4-point Likert scale was used for items on the questionnaire. They were: 1 (Never), 2 (Occasionally), 3 (Always), and 4 (Rarely).

Participants and Data Collection

Participants for this research contained a sample of four hundred (400) fresh undergraduate students of selected Universities in the North-East, of Nigeria. One hundred (100) participants, involving both males and females, each from selected universities, were randomly chosen. Four hundred (400) questionnaires were randomly distributed out of which three hundred and eighty (380) were completed and returned. This indicated an eighty-eight percent (88%) response rate. Therefore, the sample consisted of randomly selected 380 fresh university undergraduate students. Participants were given informed consent forms, which provided information regarding the study, including the contact information of the principal researcher. Participants were given five days to complete the surveys and return them together with signed informed consent forms to the principal researcher. The data were analyzed using frequency and simple percentages.

Output Hypothesis

This hypothesis, developed by Merrill Swain in 1995, states that Second language learners usually go through a 'silent period' when they listen and respond but do not produce language themselves. However, they develop a knowledge of the language which later serves as a basis for their language production. The output hypothesis holds that input alone is not sufficient as output also plays a significant role in language acquisition. The need to speak or write makes learners pay attention to some aspects of grammar that they would not need for comprehension purposes alone, thus, it will make them notice gaps in their knowledge. The hypothesis, therefore, allows learners to make a hypothesis about how the grammatical systems work, and (when meanings are negotiated) they get feedback about whether these hypotheses are correct.

Demographic Representation of the Respondents

This focuses on data that relate to gender, age, area of study, and geographical area.

Gender

Out of 100 respondents from Federal University, Gashua, Yobe State, 54, representing 54%, were males while 46, representing 46%, were females. At the University of Maiduguri, Borno State, 64 of 100 respondents representing 64% were males while 36 represented 36% were females Out of 100 respondents from the Adamawa State University, 54 represented 54% were males while 46 representing 46% were females. At Gombe State University, 64 of the 100 respondents representing 64% were males, while 36 representing 36% were females.

In summary, the data shows that 236 of the respondents which stands for 59% were males while 164 of the respondents representing 48.7% were females.

Age Group

The age distribution of respondents shows that the respondents from Federal University, Gashua 78 (78%) respondents that were between ages 18-25; 18 (18%) were between ages 26 and 30; while 36-40 years and unspecified have two (2) respondents each. The data from the University of Maiduguri showed that 78 respondents which stood for 78% were between the ages 18 and 25; 20 respondents which stood for 40% were between the ages of 26 and 30 and only two (2) respondents who represented 4% were between 31-35 years of age. At Adamawa State University Mubi, the data showed that 54 (54%) were between the ages of 18 and 25; 32 (32%) were between the ages of 26-30; 10 (10%) respondents were between the ages 31-35 while only two (2) respondents representing (2%) were between the ages of 36 and 40 and only two respondents did not specify the age group. At the Gombe State University, Gombe, the data showed that 66 (84.6%) out of 78 respondents were between the ages of 18 and 25; 10 respondents who represent 12.8% were between the ages of 26-30 while only two (2) respondents representing 2.6% were between 31 and 35 years of age.

The age group of the respondents shows that respondents between ages 18-25 have the highest number of responses which is 138 which is 73.0% of the total responses, respondents between the ages of 26-30 are 40 which stand at 21.2%, respondents between the ages of 31-35 are 7 which represent 3.7%, respondents between the ages of 36-40 and those that did not specify their ages are two (2) which represent 1.0% each.

Geographical Area

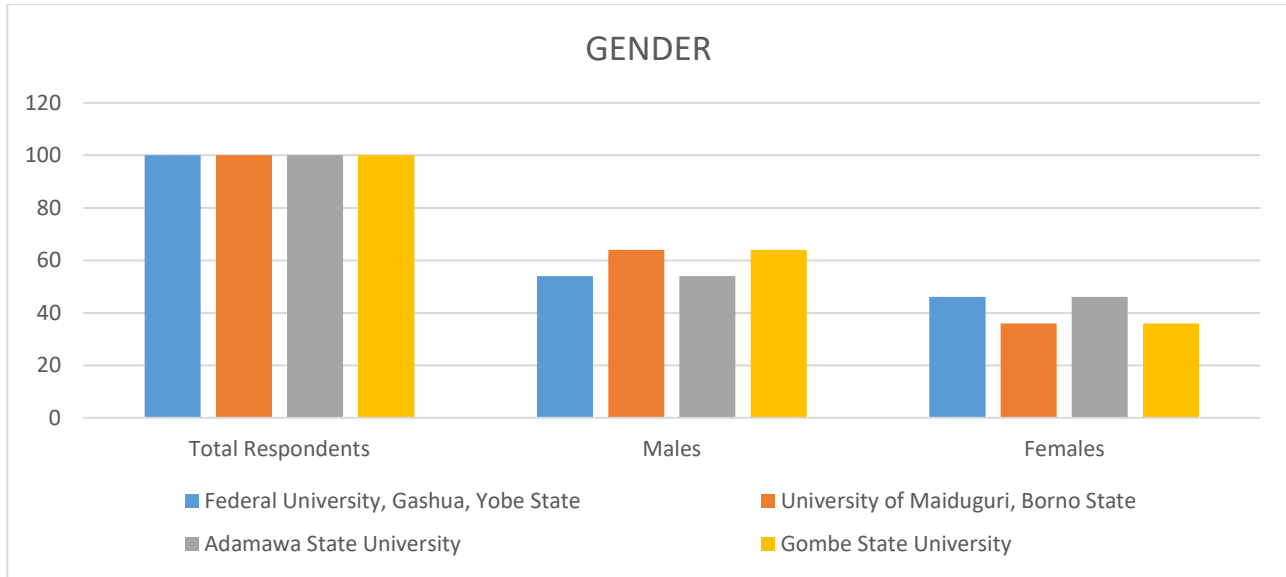
Based on the geographical area, the data from Federal University, Gashua shows that 70 out of the 100 respondents representing 70% are from the North-Eastern part of the country, 20 of the respondents (20%) are from North West and North Central while the remaining 10 (10%) of the respondents are from the Southern part of the country.

The data from the University of Maiduguri shows that 60 of the respondents are from the North-East, 25 (25%) are from the North West and North Central and 15 (15%) are from the South. At Adamawa State University, Mubi, 90 (90%) respondents are from the North East, 9 respondents from North-West and North Central while only 1 (1%) is from the South. The data from Gombe State University shows 90 (90%) respondents are from the North-Eastern part of the country, 2 are from the South while the remaining 8 respondents are from the North-West and North-Central.

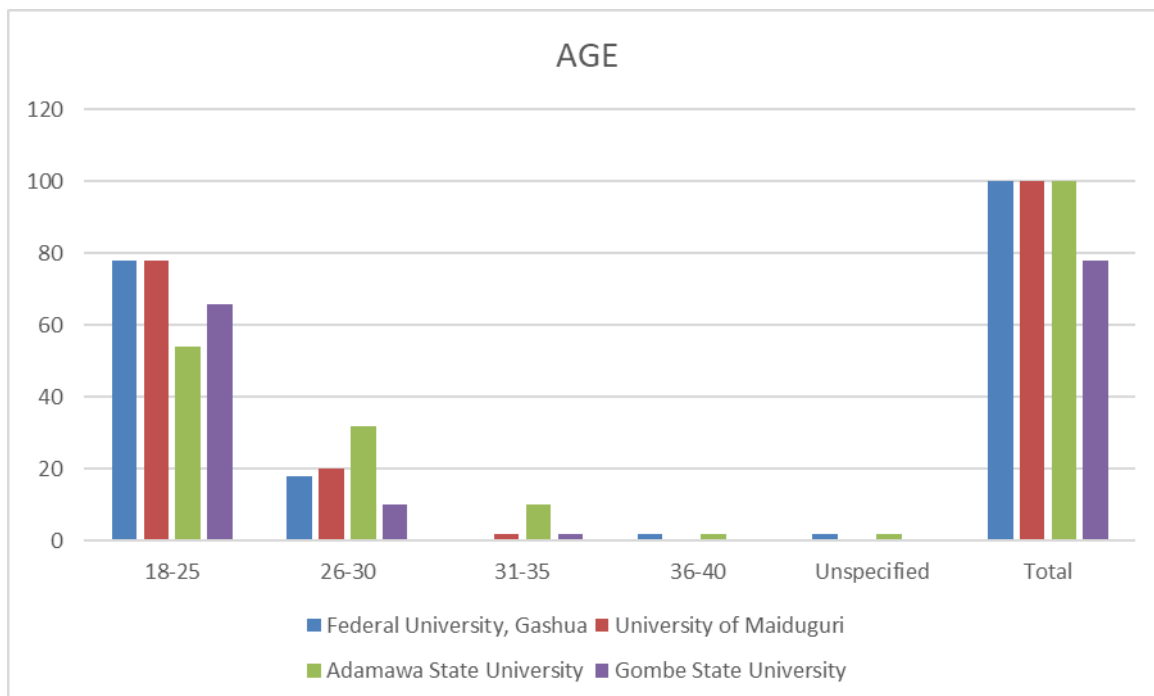
In summary, the Northeast has a total of 310 respondents which represents 78%, North West and North Central have a total of 62 respondents which stands at 16% while there is a total of 28 (7%) respondents from the South.

Demographic Representation of the Respondents

Gender Distribution

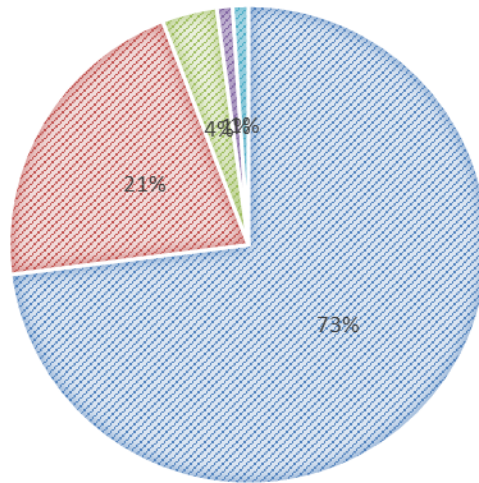


Distribution by Age of Respondents



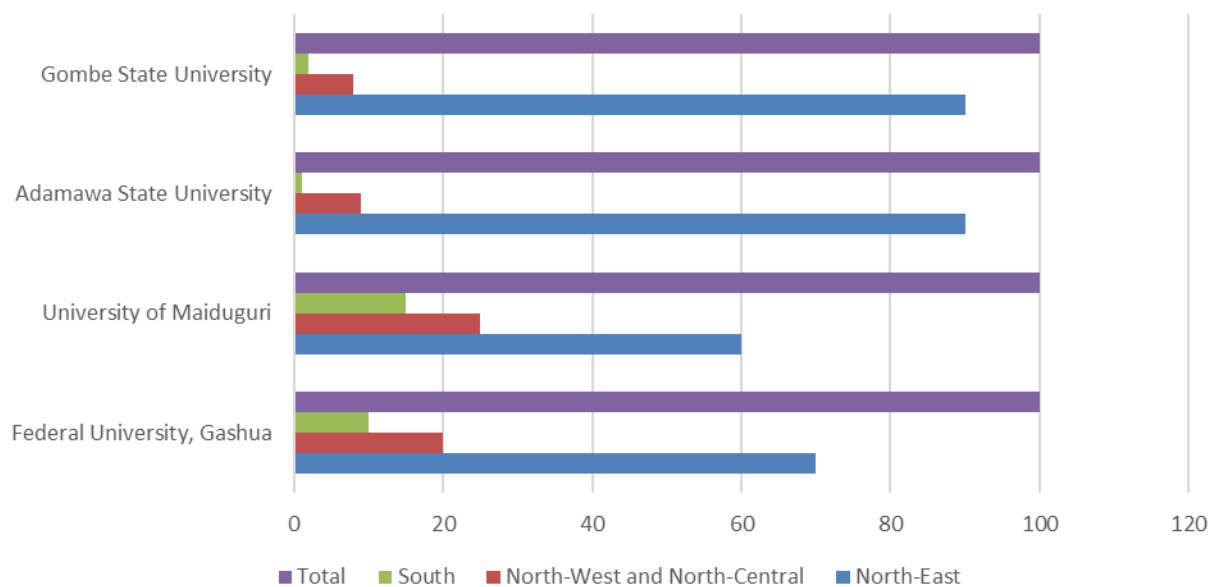
AGE SUMMARY

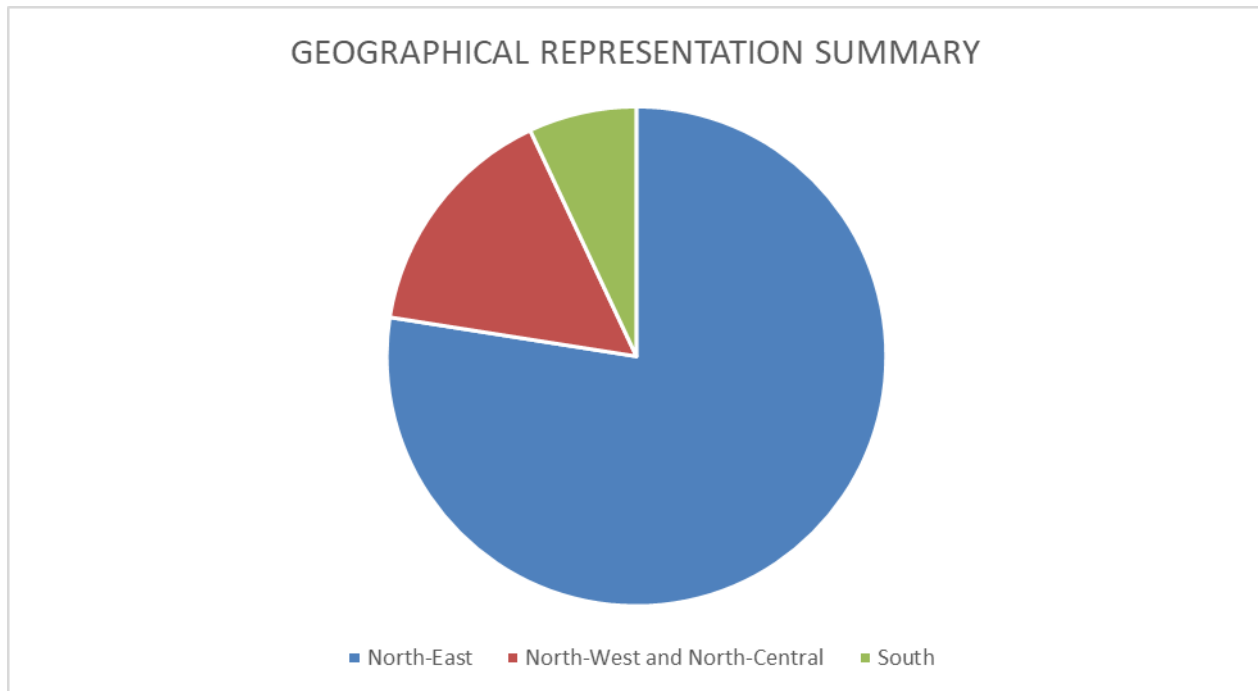
■ 18-25 ■ 26-30 ■ 31-35 ■ 36-40 ■ Unspecified



Distribution by Geographical Area of Respondents

Geographical Area





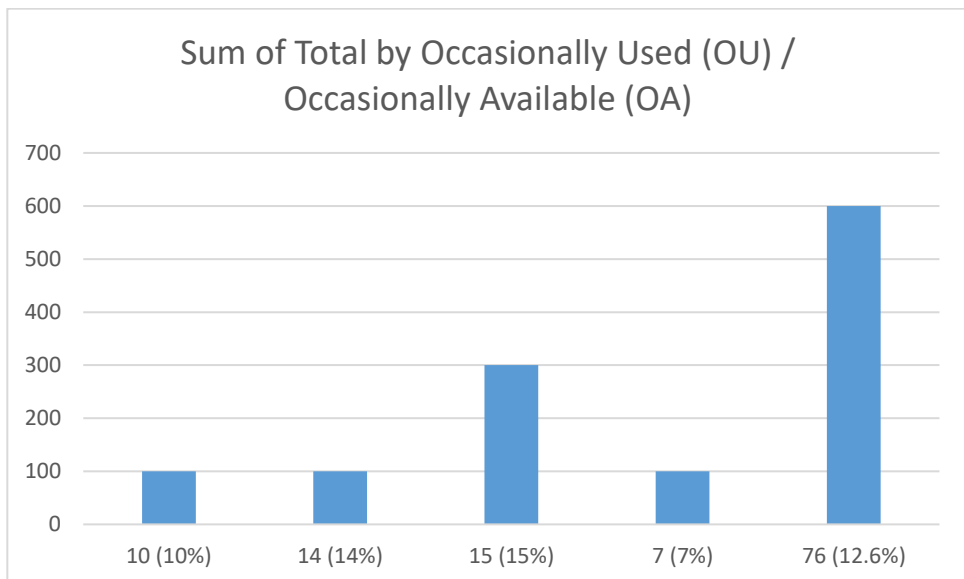
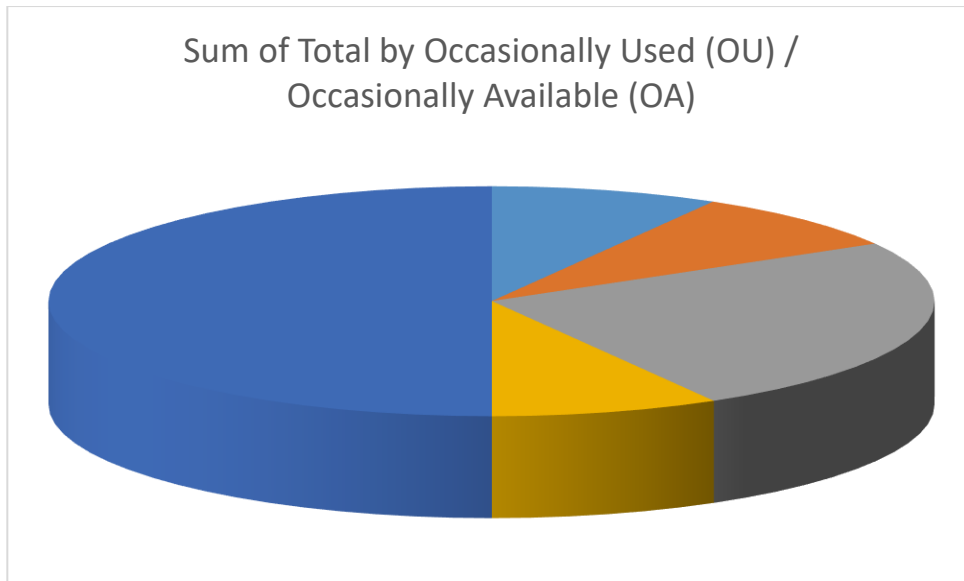
Data Presentation and Analysis

The questionnaire is divided into eight (8) parts, with each part focusing on the usage of the English language in different communicative settings. The options out of which a respondent can indicate his or her answer are in the scale of whether or not the item in question is introduced. The options are: Never Introduced (NI), Occasionally Introduced (OI), Always Introduced (AI), and Rarely Introduced (RI)

FEDERAL UNIVERSITY, GASHUA, YOBE STATE

Below is the summary of responses of respondents from Federal University, Gashua, Yobe State in the North-East, Nigeria

1. Usage of English language as a mode of communication at home			
Never Used (NU)	Occasionally Used (OU)	Always Used (AU)	Rarely Used (RU)
50 (40%)	10 (10%)	4 (4%)	36 (36%)
2. Usage of English language as the medium of instruction in primary and secondary schools			
NU: 41 (41%)	OU: 14 (14%)	AU: 5 (5%)	40 (40%)
3. Usage of English language as a mode of communication among peers in primary and secondary schools			
NU: 40 (40%)	OU: 15 (15%)	AU: 2 (2%)	RU: 43 (43%)
4. Usage of the English language as a mode of communication in religious gatherings			
NU: 50 (50%)	7 (7%)	3 (3%)	RU: 40 (40%)
5. Accessibility to TV or radio programs in the English language			
Never Available (NA) 40 (40%)	Occasionally Available (OA) 15 (15%)	Always Available (AA) 5 (5%)	Rarely Available (RA) 40 (40%)
6. Accessibility to books on English grammar, novels, and newspapers written in the English language while in primary and secondary schools			
NA: 40 (40%)	OA: 15 (15%)	AA: 10 (10%)	RA: 35 (35%)
261 (261/600*100) =43.5%	76 (76/600*100) =12.6%	29 (29/600*100) =4.8%	234 (234/600*100) = 39

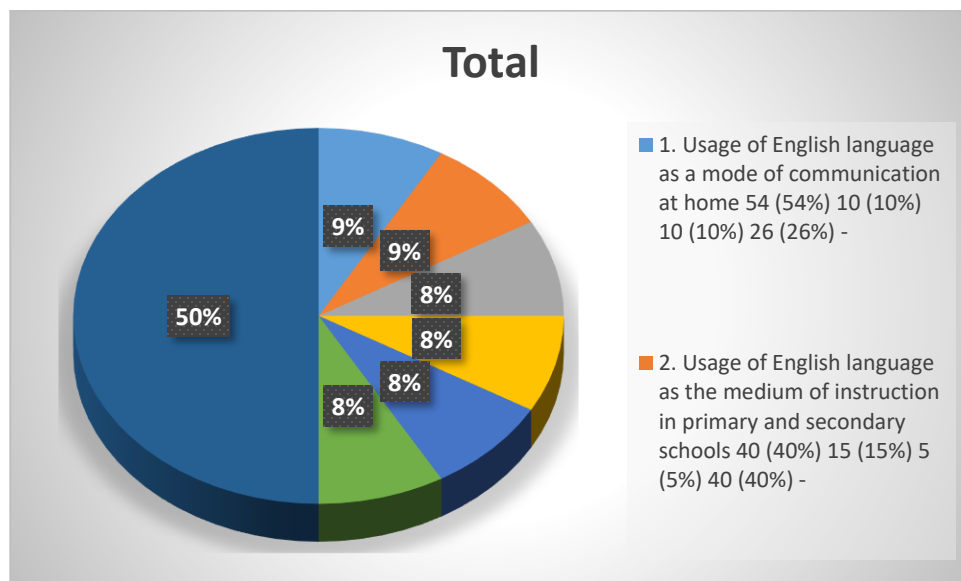
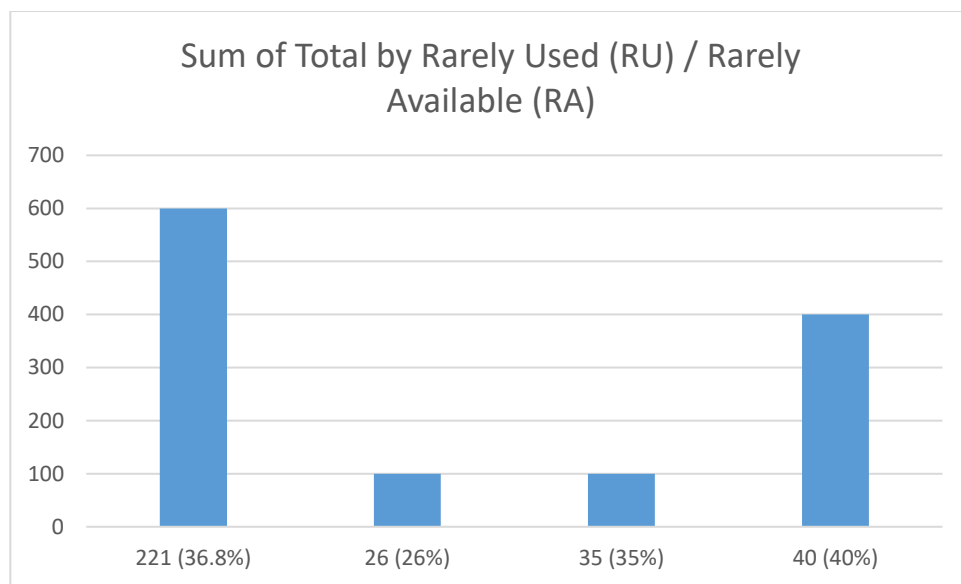


Responses from Federal University, Gashua show 43% percent of the respondents indicated that items in this category were Never Available to them; this was followed by Rarely Available at 39%. Occasionally Available stood at 12% while Always Available was the least at 4.8%. The data here indicated that students in this university are likely to be deficient in the usage of the English language or have difficulty in effectively communicating in the English language. This may be partly due to the dominance of the Hausa language as the lingua franca of the residents. This is not to say there will not be respondents with fair proficiency in the English language as reflected in 12% and 4.8% Occasionally Available and Always Available responses respectively.

UNIVERSITY OF MAIDUGURI, BORNO STATE

Below is the summary of responses of respondents from the University of Maiduguri, Borno State in the North-East, Nigeria

1. Usage of English language as a mode of communication at home				
NU: 54 (54%)	OU: 10 (10%)	AU: 10 (10%)	RU: 26 (26%)	
2. Usage of English language as the medium of instruction in primary and secondary schools				
NU: 40 (40%)	OU: 15 (15%)	AU: 5 (5%)	RU: 40 (40%)	
3. Usage of English language as a mode of communication among peers in primary and secondary				
NU: 35 (35%)	OU: 20 (20%)	AU: 5 (5%)	RU: 40 (40%)	
4. Usage of the English language as a mode of communication in religious gatherings				
NU: 45 (45%)	OU: 7 (7%)	AU: 3 (3%)	RU: 40 (40%)	ABS: 5 (5%)
5. Accessibility to TV or radio programs in the English language				
NA: 40 (40%)	OA: 15 (15%)	AA: 5 (5%)	RA: 35 (35%)	ABS: 5 (5%)
6. Accessibility to books on English grammar, novels and newspapers written in English language while in basic and secondary schools				
NA: 35 (35%)	OA: 15 (15%)	AA: 10 (10%)	RA: 40 (40%)	
249 (249/600*100)= 41.5	82 (82/600*100)=1 3.6%	38(38/600*100)= 6.3%	221(221/600*100)=3 6.8%	10 (10/600*100)=1 .6%

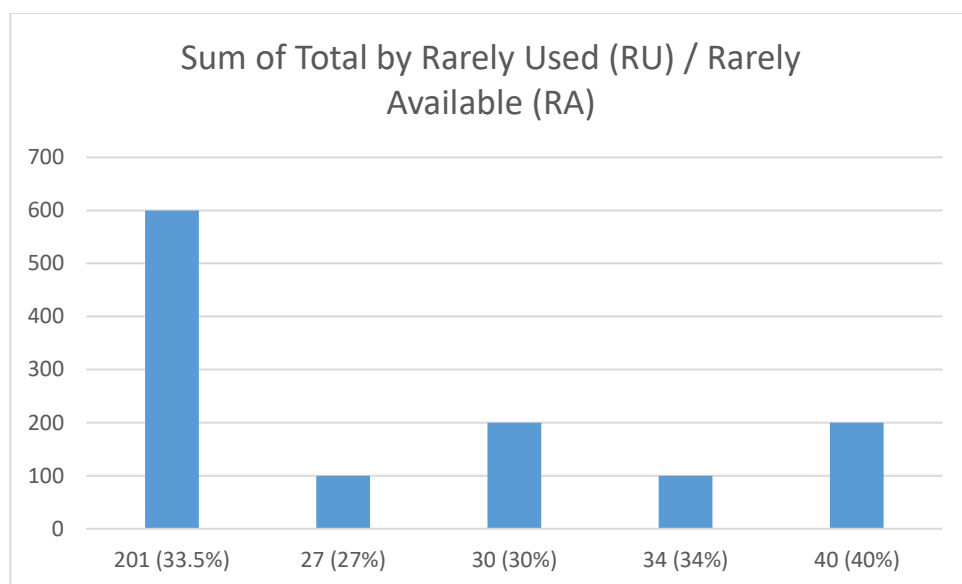


As shown in this table, majority of respondents from the University of Maiduguri indicated that items in question were not available to them. This is demonstrated in 41.5% and 36.8% responses for Never Available and Rarely Available respectively. The implication of the non-availability of the items in question to the majority of the respondents from this university is that the majority of fresh undergraduate students from the University of Maiduguri who were not exposed to the items are likely to be less proficient in the usage of the English language. However, the 13.6% and 6.3% responses for Often Available and Always Available respectively suggest that fresh undergraduate students from the University who indicated that they were exposed to the items in question are likely to possess good or at least fair proficiency in English language usage.

ADAMAWA STATE UNIVERSITY, MUBI, ADAMAWA STATE

Below is the summary of responses of respondents from Adamawa State University, Mubi, Adamawa State in the North-East, Nigeria

1. Usage of the English language as a mode of communication at home								
NU: 51 (51%)		OA: 10 (10%)		AU: 5 (5%)	RA: 34 (34%)			
2. Usage of English language as the medium of instruction in basic and secondary schools								
NU: 35 (35%)		OA: 15 (15%)		AU: 10 (10%)	RA: 40 (40%)			
3. Usage of English language as a mode of communication among peers in basic and secondary schools								
NU: 40 (40%)		OU: 12 (12%)		AU: 8 (8%)	RA: 40 (40%)			
4. Usage of the English language as a mode of communication in religious gatherings								
NU: 55 (55%)		OU: 8 (8%)		AU: 10 (10%)	RA: 27 (27%)			
5. Accessibility to TV or radio programs in the English language								
NA: 45 (45%)		OA: 15 (15%)		AA: 5 (5%)	RA: 30 (30%)	ABS: 5 (5%)		
6. Accessibility to books on English grammar, novels, and newspapers written in the English language while in basic and secondary schools								
NA: 40 (40%)		OA: 17 (17%)		AA: 8 (8%)		RA: 30 (30%)	ABS: 5 (5%)	
266 (266/600*100)=44.3%		77 (77/600*100)=12.3%		46 (46/600*100)=7.6%		201 (201/600*100)=33.5%		10 (10/600*100)=1.6%



Responses from Adamawa State University, Mubi (as shown in the table) show that there were few respondents who indicated that the items in question were available to them. This is shown in 12.3% and 7.6% responses for Often Available and Always Available respectively. Statistically, this means that there would be fresh undergraduate students from this university who are fairly proficient in the usage of the English language. However, their number is too low to be significant when compared to respondents who indicated that they were not exposed to the items in question. The 44.3% and 33.5% responses for Never Available and Rarely Available respectively show that the majority of fresh undergraduate students from Adamawa State University, Mubi are still likely to possess poor proficiency in the English language.

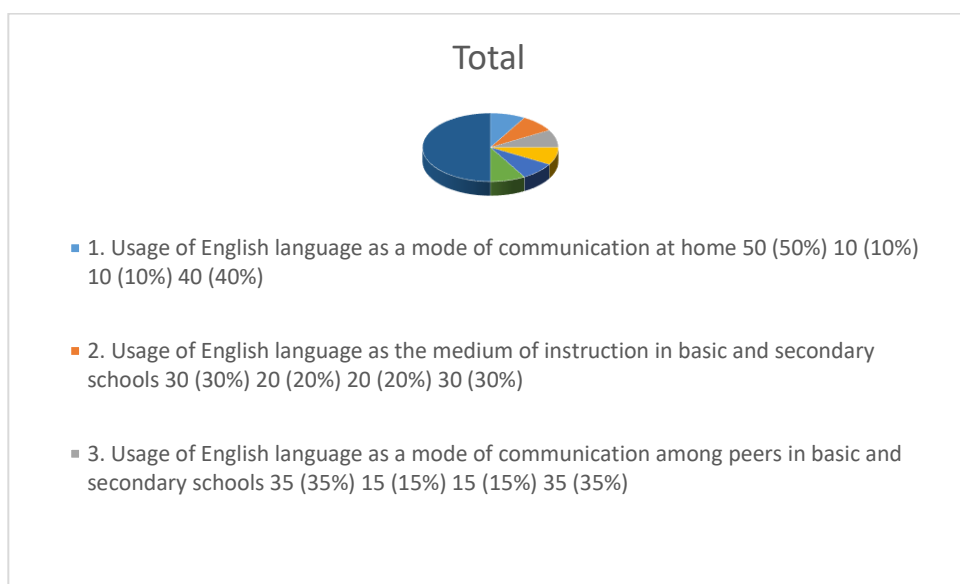
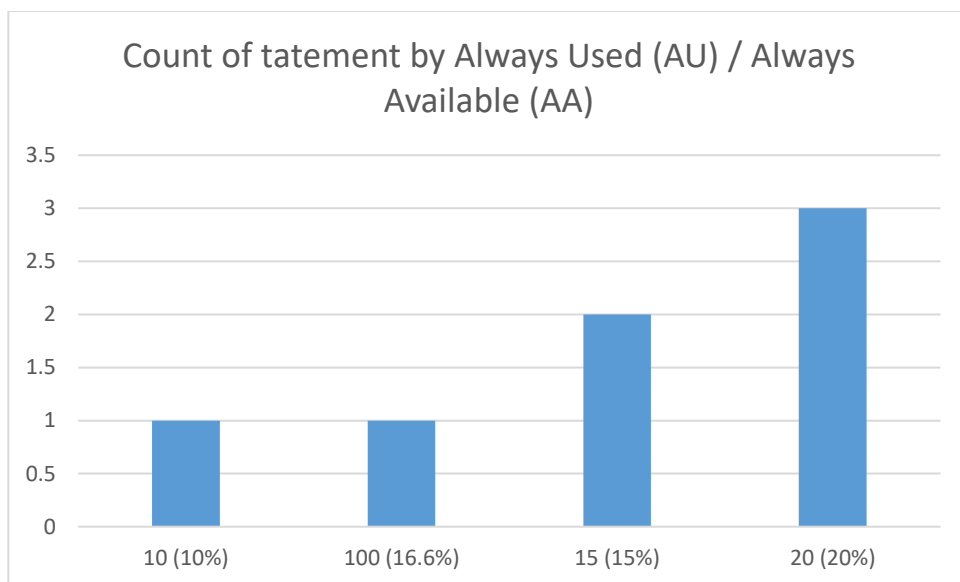
Gombe State University, Gombe, Gombe State

Below is the summary of responses of respondents from Gombe State University, Gombe, Gombe State in the North-East, Nigeria

1. Usage of English language as a mode of communication at home			
NU: 50 (50%)	OU: 10 (10%)	AU: 10 (10%)	RU: 40 (40%)
2. Usage of English language as the medium of instruction in basic and secondary schools			
NU: 30 (30%)	OU: 20 (20%)	AU: 20 (20%)	RU: 30 (30%)
3. Usage of the English language as a mode of communication among peers in basic and secondary schools			
NU: 35 (35%)	OU: 15 (15%)	AU: 15 (15%)	RU: 35 (35%)
4. Usage of the English language as a mode of communication in religious gatherings			
NU: 30 (30%)	OU: 20 (20%)	AU: 20 (20%)	RU: 30 (30%)
5. Accessibility to TV or radio programs in the English language			
NA: 40 (40%)	OA: 15 (15%)	AU: 15 (15%)	RA: 30 (30%)

6. Accessibility to books on English grammar, novels, and newspapers written in the English language while in basic and secondary schools

NA: 30 (30%)	OA: 20 (20%)	AA: 20 (20%)	RA: 30 (30%)
215 (215/600*100)=35.8 %	100 (100/600*100)=16.6 %	100 (100/600*100)=16.6 %	195 (195/600*100)=32.5 %

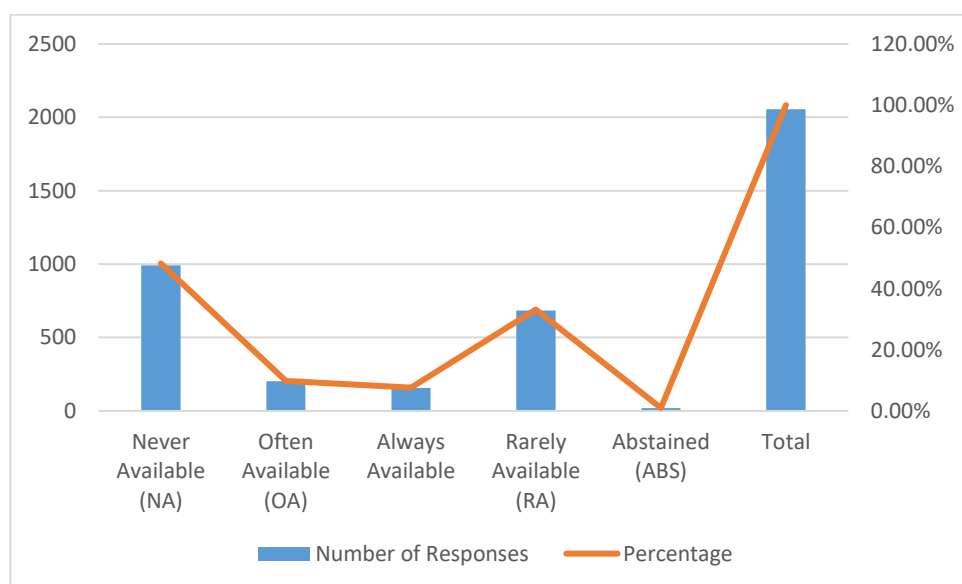


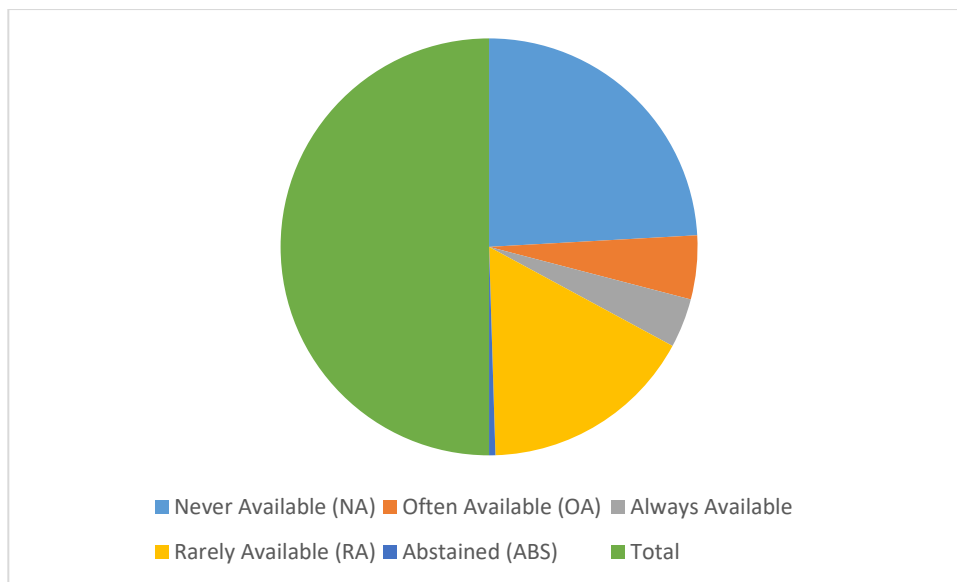
As in other universities selected in the North-East for this study, at Gombe State University, respondents who responded that the items in question were not easily accessible to them were in the

majority as shown in 35.8% and 32.5% responses for Never Available and Rarely Available respectively. This indicates that larger percentage of fresh undergraduate students from Gombe State University are likely to be less proficient in English language. The interesting part, however, is that the percentage of fresh undergraduate students from this university who claimed that they were exposed to items in question are relatively high. This means that, at Gombe State University, there would be students who have fair proficiency in English language.

Summary of Responses across all the Selected Universities

Never Available (NA)	Often Available (OA)	Always Available	Rarely Available (AA)	ABS (when no choice is made)
991(991/2054.8*100)=48.2%	203.2(203.2/2054.8*100)=9.8%	157.1(157.1/2054.8*100)=7.6%	683.5(683.5/2054.8*100)=33.2%	20(20/2054.8*100)=0.97%





Conclusion

This study has examined the causes and problems of poor usage of English language among fresh undergraduate students in Nigerian universities in the North-East. It investigated problems associated with poor English language proficiency among fresh university undergraduates in North-East, Nigeria. While existing studies on English language usage in Nigeria have largely focused on its teaching and learning in secondary schools, this study explores the causes and problems of poor English language usage among Nigerian fresh university undergraduate students in the northeast and proffers solutions to the issues. The study found that the majority of the respondents claimed that they were not exposed to items relating to learning of English language and usage of the English language in various communicative settings. While there were also respondents who indicated that they were exposed to these items, the results of the study showed that a larger percentage of respondents' lack of exposure to important aspects of English language learning and usage in various communicative settings was mainly responsible for poor usage of English language among fresh undergraduate students in the North-East.

Recommendations

The study makes the following recommendations:

1. That, given that the Hausa language has been so entrenched as the lingua franca in the Northeast, the English language should be made the compulsory medium of instruction starting from higher classes in basic schools.
2. The utmost priority should be given to the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing, right from the beginning of basic school.

3. Debates in the English language should be made compulsory across basic and secondary schools in the Northeast and active participation of students should be of utmost importance.
4. At home and in communities, students should be exposed to listening to programs conducted in the English language on Radio and Television.
5. School libraries should be well furnished with books on English language grammar, composition, and comprehension
6. Reading and writing culture should be encouraged through the organization of reading and writing competitions.

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An Exploration of Creativity in Selected News Report in the Punch Newspapers

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Abstract

Creativity is an integral part of writing which enables writers to craft unique ideas, perspectives, and narratives that engage and captivate readers. The lack of creativity or the abundant use of creativity in any text can either hinder or enhance understanding of the text. Therefore, this study is on how creativity is used in news reporting to disambiguate information. Using Halliday and Hasan's (1976) perspectives of cohesion as expanded by Idowu (2016), this study explicated the various lexical tools like reiteration/ repetition, synonym, antonym, collocation, and grammatical tools such as reference, conjunction and substitution as journalistic tools for creativity and clarity. The study employed the mixed methods which involved both a textual analysis for the content and quantitative analysis for the percentile findings. The findings revealed that the reporter made use of grammatical features like reference having eight occurrences (40%), closely followed by conjunction with seven occurrences (35%), substitution with 5 occurrences (25%) to lead the readers aright and show clarity of the speaker's thought. However, there was no occurrence of ellipsis. The reporter also made use of lexical tools of repetition, synonym, antonym and collocation having 46%, 40%, 07% and 07% respectively to emphasize the speaker's points and avoid misinterpretations. The study concluded that the cohesion tools used in this text enhanced the creativity skill of the selected reporter and helped to disambiguate information by simplifying complex lexical items which might lead to misinterpretation of the text. It also encourages the public to stay informed about accurate and updated information so as to help them make proper economic decision. The study recommended that reporters should be innovative by integrating items that will aid creativity and enhance the overall understanding of any text.

Keywords: Cohesion, Creativity, Journalism, Language, News reporting, Punch Newspapers,

1. Introduction

Creativity is considered very important to achieving success in any field of life. Given the central role of creativity in the future post-information society, a call for a pragmatist approach to the study of creativity is advocated (Corraza, 2016). Creativity in news reporting in particular is paramount so as to keep the audience's attention and help in simplifying complex news stories, making them more accessible and understandable to the general public. Creative writing is a wide umbrella under which an endless number of ideas can be expressed. There has been an agitation of the creation of creative writing in primary schools (Okpala and Alaku, 2024) which would help any writer that passes through this level of education to developing the act of creative thinking. Oni & Soji-Oni (2021) assert that creativity is all about bringing together different ideas and transforming them to make something new, unique and personal. Every individual has an innate ability that can be guided to fruition.

Creativity in news reporting is a vital aspect of journalism that goes beyond the traditional notion of simply relaying facts and events. According to Witschge (2019), creativity involves the application of imaginative and innovative approaches to tell stories, engage audiences, and provide deeper insights into current events. News is very key in the society as it provides information, fostering transparency, and facilitating public discourse. The News serves as a cornerstone of an informed and democratic society, helping citizens navigate a complex world and engage in meaningful discussions. The news covers a wide range of topics that can help identify emerging trends in the society; politics, economics and culture. In today's fast-paced

and digitally connected world, the demand for news and information is constant. To stand out in this competitive landscape, journalists and news organizations need to infuse creativity into their reporting. Creativity in news reporting means finding fresh and compelling ways to present stories, adding depth, context, and understanding to the facts (Lopez, 2022). Creativity in news reporting is a dynamic and evolving aspect of journalism that has to be carefully used. It empowers journalists to break through the noise, engage readers, and provide a deeper understanding of the world's events. It is necessary in producing high-quality journalism when is rightly used.

Leventhal (2022) believes that:

Writing a news report may be the toughest challenge for any creative writer to undertake. You cannot bend the facts, usually you were assigned to cover the story whether you like the topic or have experience writing about that topic or not, still, you are expected to write enthusiastically about a subject that may personally bore you to tears.
(5)

Leventhal further posits that news reporting for print, broadcast or online media can be quite problematic and challenging. The key to writing a great news report is to make the reader feel like s/he is standing right there as it is happening. If you are reporting on a political speech, we want to feel as if we are standing right in the midst of the crowd and it takes creativity to achieve this (Leventhal, 2022).

The language of the media has been studied from several sociolinguistic, pragmatic and discourse analytical perspectives to explicate how language operates within media contexts and influences audience perceptions and societal dynamics. (Leventhal, 2022; Witschge, 2019;

Lopez, 2022; Corazza, 2016). However, the focus of this study is quite different from the existing studies, as the aim is to examine how the media make use of creativity to disambiguate information and disseminate accurate and updated information to the public which is to educate and help them to take proper decision about health, politics, and education. Language, the main tool needs to be investigated as it has been found that the Nigerian media often cause conflicts through their reports (Kangiwa and Koko, 2021).

Therefore, this paper investigates the creativity in news reporting by focusing on a news report in Punch newspaper on ‘Subsidy Removal, Challenge Nigeria must Experience by Soludo. The extent to which the creativity (if any) embedded in the report stands out to capturing the attention of their audience and how this creativity (if any) contributes to clarity or ambiguity of information are the concerns of this paper.

This study aims to investigate the creativity in news reporting while the specific objectives are to:

1. identify and analyze the manifestations of lexico-grammatical cohesion in the selected news report as they reflect creativity.
2. examine the functional role of each of the manifestations within the contexts of the selected text as they relate to creativity.
3. examine how the identified manifestations of cohesion disambiguate information in the selected text.

2. Theoretical Considerations

The research is carried out within the theoretical framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics but specifically discourse analysis. Discourse analysis concentrates on how language is used to create meaning that is the use of language beyond the sentence. Osisanwo (2003) defines discourse analysis as the analysis of discourse that is necessary for the analysis of language in use. On the other hand, Cohesion is a framework under discourse analysis that focuses on the way a text comes together as a meaningful unit. It is a relation of meaning that exists within a text. Osisanwo (2003) asserts that cohesion is the linguistic means by which a text functions as a single unit. In the same vein, Idowu (2016) posits that cohesion is a linguistic process through which sentences are connected to make a text. She further explains that cohesion is a useful tool for interpreting a discourse and, a means of creating texts. In other words, cohesion is a linguistic tool used in analyzing texts.

Halliday and Hasan (1976) made a detailed classification of the cohesive devices in English; these cohesive devices were expanded by Idowu (2016). These authors identified two major types of cohesive relations namely grammatical and lexical cohesion. According to Idowu (2016), these two major forms of cohesive relations cannot be separated rigidly as different types because many instances of these forms of cohesion overlap. According to Halliday and Hasan (1976), cohesion as the major characteristic of coherence covering linguistic properties of the language, gives a sequence of sentences unity. It is the property of unity in a written text or a segment of spoken discourse that stems from links among its surface elements, as when words in one sentence are repeated in another, and especially from the fact that some words or

phrases interpretation depend upon material in preceding or following text indicated by explicit syntactic ties between linguistic elements. Idowu (2016) recognized the following cohesive features: Reference, substitution, Ellipsis, Conjunction (grammatical) and collocation, repetition, synonym, hyponym, polysemy, metonymy and antonym (lexical). These two perspectives of cohesion are fully explored in this study.

3. Conceptual Clarification

3.1 The Concept of Creativity

Creativity is the use of imagination or original ideas to create something (Okpala and Alaku, 2024). Creativity brings about something new. It is a phenomenon whereby something new and valuable is formed. Runco & Jaeger (2012) opine that ‘Creativity requires both originality and effectiveness’. They further explain that originality is often labeled novelty, if something is not unusual, novel, or unique, it is commonplace, mundane or conventional. If it is not original, then not creative. They say again that originality is not alone sufficient for creativity. Original things must be effective to be creative. Like originality, effectiveness takes various forms. It may take the form of (and be labeled as) usefulness, fit, or appropriateness. ‘Originality is vital, but must be balanced with fit and appropriateness’ (Runco, 1988). Hence, creativity requires originality and usefulness. Franken (2021) affirms that ‘Creativity is the tendency to generate or recognize ideas, alternatives, or possibilities that may be useful in solving problems, communicating with others, and entertaining ourselves and others.

Creativity is any act, idea, or product that changes an existing domain or that transforms an existing into a new one. According to Franken (2021), a creative person has novel idea. The

degree of novelty of which the person is capable or which he habitually exhibits can be tested in terms of the frequency of uncommon, yet acceptable, responses to items. Creativity is the expression of the individual's characteristics of personality and imagination via art, writing, and other means. Camberos (2010) defines creativity as the ability of a person to create, perform, or think of something in a way that has not been done before.

3.2 The Concept of News reporting

The term news comes from the word new, written in old English either as newes or niwes, but in modern day as an acronym for the four sides of the world-north, east, west and south (Palczewski, 2018). News is information on current events which may be presented through different media such as printing, postal, on television etc. It refers to newly received or noteworthy information about recent events. News is information we are unaware of until we read or saw it in the media (Frost, 2010). Palczewski (2018) posits that news covers a wide range of topics like politics, sports, food and health. On the other hand, Frost (2010) defines reporting as an act of gathering, verifying, and presenting information about events and issues. Reporting can be done through various mediums, such as, newspapers, on television, radio and online articles. Ogbonna (2022) affirms that news reporting is a subset of reporting specifically focused on the gathering and dissemination of news. It involves the process of collecting, analyzing, and presenting news stories to the public through various forms of media such as newspapers, broadcast news, online news, websites, and social media. News reporting aims to provide accurate, timely, and relevant information to the public about the current issues and events.

3.3 Creativity and Innovation

Creativity and innovation go hand in hand; it is creativity that leads to innovation. This is supported by Csikszentmihalyi (2001), Innovation has become a requirement for human existence. Oni (2020) explains that ‘More creative individuals can better take advantage of opportunities and adapt more effectively to challenges and difficulties in their personal and professional lives’. He further asserts that ‘students who demonstrate creativity in assessment tasks are frequently awarded grades superior to their peers to reward this act or the expression of thinking’. For something to be creative, it must be novel, have value, or be appropriate to the cognitive demands of the situation.

Creativity is regarded as a key building block for innovation. Creativity entails a level of originality and novelty that is essential for innovation. Although creativity is a fundamental part of innovation, it is not accurate to interchange the terms. Innovation encourages the further processing of the output of the creative process (the idea) to allow the exploitation of its potential value through development. Creativity and innovation are relatives. If you want innovation to occur, creativity best be on the menu (Franken, 2021).

4. Data and Method

The data for this study was purposively chosen- news report on subsidy removal. The premise for the selection was to investigate how language is used in news reporting, most importantly to examine the creativity embedded in the text as it affects ambiguity. Furthermore, the data chosen was also informed by the need to analyze the current trend in Nigeria which is ‘subsidy removal’. This study is restricted to a Punch newspaper report by Deborah Tolu-Kolawole on

the 3rd of August, 2023. The title of the news report is ‘Subsidy Removal, Challenge Nigeria must Experience’. This was the disclosure made by Soludo during the commissioning of the Solution Innovation District in Awka, Anambra state capital. It consists of 415 words, 2,538 characters, 10 paragraphs and 37 lines. The selected text was downloaded from the internet and analyzed to show the lexico-grammatical manifestations in the news report. The study adopted the mixed method; the qualitative method accounted for the content and the textual analyses, while the quantitative method was used for the percentile findings. For easy identification, each lexico-grammatical cohesion item bears a code: Repetition-LR; Collocation-LC; Antonym-LA; Synonym-LS; Hyponym-LH; Substitution-GS; Ellipsis-GE; Reference-GR; and Conjunction-GC.

5. Results

Subsidy removal, challenge Nigeria must experience -Soludo

The underlined words reveal the use of anaphoric Reference (GR); ‘challenge’ for ‘subsidy removal’.

The Governor of Anambra State, Chukwuma Soludo, has said the removal of subsidy on Premium Motor Spirit popularly known as petrol, and the current floating of the naira are some of the disruptive changes Nigeria must undergo before it will emerge “victorious”. The former governor of Nigeria’s apex bank also stressed the need for the country to embrace its greatest resource which he said is “human capital”.

Four lexico-grammatical cohesion manifestations are identified in the underlined words. There is the use of anaphoric Reference (SR) for ‘Chukwuma Soludo’ and cataphoric Reference ‘he’ for the ‘Governor of Anambra State, also in the use of pronominal item ‘it’ for ‘Nigeria’. There is also the Repetition (LR) of ‘country’, ‘Nigeria’. There is also the use of Synonym (LS) of

‘country’ and ‘Nigeria’; ‘said’ and ‘stressed’. There is also the use of Conjunctions (GC) ‘and’ & ‘before’.

The governor noted that the country must focus on the future while jettisoning the “old order”. He also stressed the need for a thorough embrace of technology which according to him will provide more opportunities for youths in society.

The underlined words show four lexico-grammatical cohesion manifestations. There is the use of Conjunction (GC) ‘while’ & ‘which’. There is also the use of Reference (GR), ‘he’ & ‘him’ are anaphoric references to ‘the governor’. ‘Future’ & ‘old order’ are used as Antonyms (LA) while ‘noted’ and stressed’ are used as Synonyms (LS).

According to a statement made available to our correspondent in Abuja on Thursday, Soludo disclosed this during the commissioning of the Solution Innovation District in Awka, the state capital. He said, “The world may be going east or west, but Nigeria must go through necessary disruptive changes. The removal of subsidies and the floating of exchange rates are just some of these changes. It is quite auspicious that we are opening this district at this critical time.

The underlined words reveal five lexico-grammatical cohesion features. ‘The disclosure’ is a Substitute (GS) for Soludo’s statement in the preceding sentence- ‘According to a statement...’ and ‘this’, a substitute for ‘Solution Innovation’. ‘The state capital’ is an anaphoric Reference (GR) to ‘Awka’; ‘he’ is also an anaphoric reference to ‘Soludo’. ‘East’ & ‘west’ are also Antonyms (LA). There is Repetition (LR) of the lexical cohesion ‘changes’ & ‘this’. The use of Conjunction (GC) is reflected in the words ‘and; & ‘but’.

Our greatest resource is our human capital, and we want to mine it to its infinite elasticity. Only those who can see tomorrow. Only those who plan and work towards it can control the future.

I ask our youths to look up to opportunities in these ongoing disruptive changes.

There are four lexico-grammatical cohesion manifestations in the underlined words. ‘Disruptive changes’ (also in the 4th analysis) ‘human capital’ (also in the 2nd analysis), ‘youths’ & ‘opportunities’ (also in the 3rd analysis), ‘only those who’ are lexical items that are repeated (LR). ‘Our’ & ‘we’ are anaphoric Reference (GR) manifestations to ‘Nigerians’ & ‘these’(in the 4th analysis) is a cataphoric reference to ‘disruptive changes’. ‘Tomorrow’ and ‘future are Synonyms (LS) used here. The use of Conjunction (GC) is reflected in the word ‘and’,

In a digital age, human capital appreciates with continuous usage. We must keep on innovating and acquiring multiple scalable skills to control the future. We want the youths and children of Ndi Anambra to be prepared for this future- invention, innovation, and technology, ”Governor Soludo said. Speaking further, Soludo noted that the state would empower youths in the state to ensure that they control the future and become world champions.

There are six lexico-grammatical cohesion manifestations in the underlined words. ‘Human capital’, ‘future’, ‘Soludo’ ‘youths’, & ‘state’ are manifestations of Repetition (LR). There is also the manifestation of Synonyms (LS)-‘youths’ & ‘children’ ‘noted’ & ‘said’. ‘We’ is a substitute (GS) for ‘Nigerians’. ‘Invention’, ‘innovation’ & ‘technology’ are manifestations of Collocation (LC). ‘They’ & ‘world champions’ are anaphoric References (SR) to ‘youths’. ‘And’ & ‘with’ are manifestations of Conjunction (GC).

We must focus on tomorrow. The old order is gone, so let’s not cry to bring it back. We are empowering and training our youths to control the future and become champions of the world”.

There are five lexico- grammatical cohesion manifestations in the underlined words. ‘We’ is a substitute (GS) for ‘Nigerians’. ‘Tomorrow & ‘future’; ‘empowering’ & ‘training’ are the manifestations of Synonyms (LS). ‘Old order’ is repeated (LR) in analysis 3, ‘it’ is an anaphoric reference (GR) to the ‘old order; ‘champions; is also an anaphoric reference to ‘youths’. ‘And’ is a manifestation of Conjunction (GC).

“Technology is our mantra. We want to get technology to become our culture. Everything is technology and technology is everywhere. The criminals that cause a nuisance in our society cannot define us. They are completely insignificant,” the Governor stressed.

Five lexico-grammatical cohesion manifestations are identified in the underlined words. ‘Mantra’ is an anaphoric reference (GR) to ‘technology’, ‘our’ is also an anaphoric reference to ‘we’, ‘us’ & ‘they’ are references to ‘criminals’. ‘Technology’ ‘our’ & ‘is’ are manifestations of repetition (LR). There is also the manifestation of synonyms (LS) - ‘everything’ & ‘everywhere’. ‘Culture’ is a substitute (GS) for ‘technology’ & ‘nuisance’ is a substitute for ‘criminals’. The use of conjunction (GC) is reflected in the word ‘and’.

Earlier, the Special Adviser to the Governor on Innovation and Business Incubation, Chinwe Okoli thanked the Governor for his commitment to actualizing the vision which she explained is quite timely.

Four lexico-grammatical cohesion features are identified in the underlined words. ‘Governor’ & ‘the’ are manifestations of ‘Repetition (LR)’. ‘Chinwe Okoli’ is an anaphoric reference (GR) to ‘the Special Adviser’ & ‘his’ is also an anaphoric reference to ‘the Governor’. The use of conjunction (GC) is reflected in the word ‘and’. ‘The vision’ is a substitute (GS) for Soludo’s statement.

Table 1: Summary of the Lexical and Grammatical Analyses

Grammatical Manifestations	Number of Occurrences	Percentages of Occurrences	Lexical Manifestations	Number of Occurrences	Percentage of Occurrences
References (GR)	8/20	40	Repetition(LR)	7/15	46
Conjunction (GC)	7/20	35	Synonyms (LS)	6/15	40
Substitution (GS)	5/20	25	Antonyms (LA)	1/15	7
			Collocation (LC)	1/15	7
Total	20	100		15	100

Table 2: The Overall Percentage of the Lexical and Grammatical Manifestations

Cohesion	Total	Total in Percentage	%
Grammatical	20	20/35	57.1
Lexical	14	15/35	42.9
Total	34		100

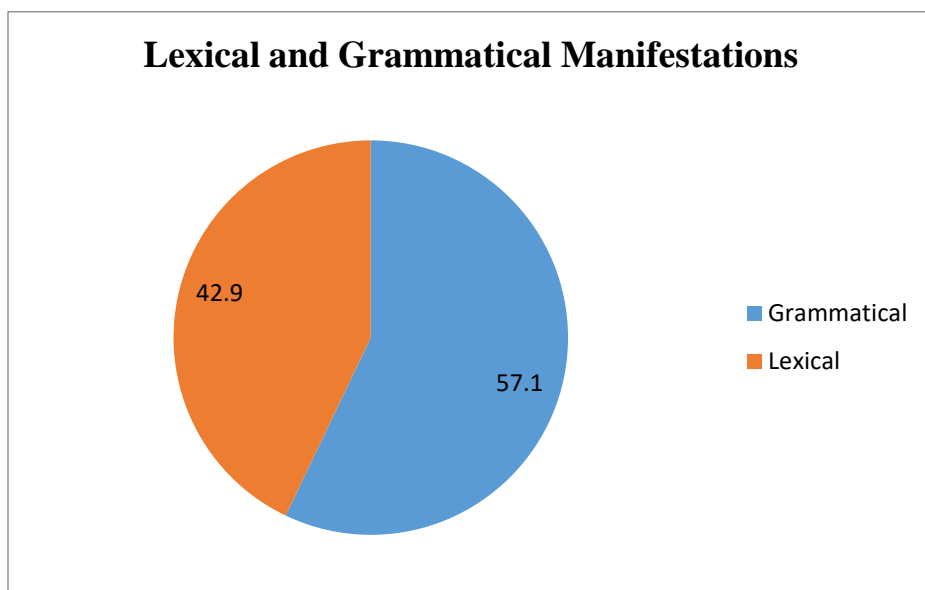


Figure 1: A Pie Chart showing the Overall Percentage of the Lexico-Grammatical Manifestations

6. Discussion

From Table 1, under the grammatical cohesion, the use of Reference (SR) has the most occurrences of eight (8) times with 40%. The reporter likely made use of this device to refer to the speaker's statement for credibility and provided valuable support and context for the information presented to lead the readers aright and show clarity of the speaker's thought. Closely following GR is Conjunction (GC) which has seven (7) occurrences with 35% to show that the report connects smoothly, thereby enhancing its overall impact of clarity and creativity. The third position is occupied by Substitution (GS) with five (5) occurrences with 25% to show that the reporter was more detailed in his or her expression and did not substitute unnecessarily so that the readers can fully understand the main ideas of the text. There was no manifestation of Ellipsis in the text, perhaps, the writer wants to be more detailed and does not want to omit

words unnecessarily. However, not using ellipsis can lead to overly long sentences, which may make the text boring.

For the Lexical Cohesion, the most frequently used in this news report was Repetition (LR) which occurred seven (7) times with 46%. The reporter used this device to emphasize important points. This was also done so that the reporter would not be misinterpreted which could also enhance the reader to assimilate the reports. Synonym (LS) is next to repetition with five (6) occurrences and 40%, the writer used this tool to enrich the text which would add variety to the text. However, overuse of this tool can hamper the understanding of the text. Next are both Antonyms (LA) and Collocation (LC), having 7% with one (1) occurrence each. It was obvious that LA and LC were sparingly used in the text because of their indirect nature which might hamper the overall understanding of the text, especially collocation that the meanings are tied to the company of words they keep.

From Table 2, there were thirty-four (35) manifestations of both grammatical and lexical cohesion. Lexical cohesion occurred fourteen (15) times with grand percentage of 42.9, and there were twenty (20) manifestations of grammatical features with grand percentage of 57.1. This showed that the reporter made use of grammatical cohesion than the lexical cohesion.

It can be deduced from the analysis that the manifestations of cohesion in the news report bring out the creativity which helps to disambiguate information. With the use of cohesion, the news report is clear and easy to understand and this clarity is creatively employed by using lexical items that captivate the reader. Although the writer did not make use of some grammatical and lexical tools like Ellipsis, Polysemy, Metonymy and Hyponymy, she was still able to avoid ambiguity of information. The use of the cohesion tools enables the news report to flow

smoothly from one point to the next which is creatively used for clarity and maintaining readers' interest. The manifestations of cohesion in this news report provide the structure for the creative use of words thereby engaging the audience. There is a balance between maintaining factual accuracy and adding a creative flair to make the report clear, more interesting and memorable. However, some lexical tools like metonymy, polysemy and hyponymy that the reporter did not make use of shows her level of education and linguistic competence.

7. Conclusion

The examination of the creativity in the selected news reporting revealed usage of different cohesion tools to achieve different goals, particularly to disambiguate information. Beyond the fact that the reporter creatively used lexical items to project her aim and avoid ambiguity, she was able to communicate the speaker's ideas and values. This paper has added to the existing body of knowledge on cohesion and has equally added to the understanding of the use of language in media. The cohesion tools used in this text revealed the creativity embedded in the text which helps in simplifying complex lexical items that might lead to ambiguity and misinterpretation of the text. It also encourages the public to stay informed about important issues which can lead to increased civic engagement that contribute to national development.

The study concluded that the main aim of any creative writing is to disambiguate information and enhance comprehension of any given text; this is achieved in this text. However, it cannot be ruled out that overuse and underuse of creative items may also hinder comprehension of any text. Therefore, it is recommended that writers should be innovative by integrating items that will aid creativity. However, they should be careful in creatively using lexical items to project

their themes as the aim is to enhance the proper understanding of the text and disambiguate information. It must be stated, that this study is not all-exhaustive as far as media language is concerned and a lot of research on this can still be carried out using other linguistic levels of analysis.

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Assessing Oral Proficiency of 400-Level French Learners at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria: Challenges, Strategies and Interventions

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Abstract

This paper evaluates the oral proficiency of 400-level learners of French at ABU Zaria, highlighting the challenges faced by students in their oral practice. Through a comprehensive review of existing literature, the study identifies key obstacles in achieving oral fluency. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the research integrates a survey on strategies and the use of online resources, alongside direct classroom observations and an oral expression exercise. The latter is assessed using criteria derived from the CEFL(Common European Framework for Languages) DELF (Diplôme d'études de la langue française) exams assessment grids. Results are meticulously analyzed, leading to targeted recommendations for enhancing oral proficiency among learners

Keywords: Oral proficiency, strategies , self assessment, online resources, ,CEFR, DELF

Introduction

The proficiency in oral communication is a pivotal component of language learning, particularly in acquiring a foreign language such as French. For 400-level learners at Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) Zaria, mastering oral proficiency is essential not only for academic success but also for practical communication in diverse professional and social contexts. Despite its importance, students frequently encounter significant challenges in achieving fluency and confidence in spoken French.

This paper aims to evaluate the oral proficiency of these advanced learners, identifying the specific obstacles they face and proposing actionable strategies for improvement. Through a mixed-methods approach, the study combines quantitative data from surveys on learning strategies and the utilization of online resources with qualitative insights from direct classroom observations. These observations include an oral expression exercise, rigorously assessed using the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and Diplôme d'Études en Langue Française (DELF) assessment grids.

By critically analyzing the results, this research seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the current state of oral proficiency among ABU Zaria's French learners. The findings will inform practical recommendations aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of oral French instruction, ultimately fostering better communication skills among students.

Literature Review

Oral proficiency in a foreign language involves several sub-skills, including pronunciation, fluency, accuracy, and the ability to use language appropriately in different contexts (Bygate, 1987; Council of Europe, 2001). Common challenges in developing oral proficiency include lack of exposure to the target language, anxiety, and limited opportunities for practice (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986; Gardner & Lambert, 1972).

General Problems Encountered by Learners of French

Learners of French face numerous challenges that impede their progress in acquiring oral proficiency. One prominent issue is pronunciation difficulties. According to Tranel (1987),

French phonetics can be particularly challenging for non-native speakers due to its unique sound system and pronunciation rules that differ significantly from those of many other languages. These pronunciation issues can hinder effective communication and reduce learners' confidence.

Grammar complexity is another significant hurdle. Posner (1996) highlights that the intricacies of French grammar, with its numerous rules and exceptions, can be overwhelming for learners. The complexity of verb conjugations, gender agreements, and sentence structures often leads to frequent errors, which can be discouraging for students striving for fluency.

A major barrier to achieving oral proficiency is the lack of practice opportunities. Kinginger (2008) emphasizes that consistent and meaningful practice is essential for language acquisition. However, many learners do not have sufficient opportunities to practice speaking French in real-life contexts, limiting their ability to develop fluency and spontaneity in the language.

Lack of confidence is another critical issue. Horowitz and Horowitz (1986) argue that many language learners experience anxiety and self-doubt when speaking in a foreign language. This lack of confidence can prevent them from actively participating in conversations and taking risks necessary for language improvement.

Cultural nuances also pose challenges for French learners. Porcher (1995) notes that understanding and appropriately using cultural references and idiomatic expressions are crucial for effective communication. Learners who are not familiar with the cultural context of the language may struggle to fully grasp the meaning of certain phrases and may inadvertently use them inappropriately.

Specific Problems Encountered by Learners of French in Nigeria

In the Nigerian context, learners of French face additional challenges that further complicate their language acquisition process. Pronunciation issues are prevalent, as noted by Iji (2013), who explains that the phonetic differences between French and Nigerian indigenous languages can cause significant pronunciation difficulties for learners.

Limited vocabulary is another common problem. Anjorin (2005) points out that many Nigerian learners of French have a restricted vocabulary, which hampers their ability to express themselves effectively. This limitation often results from insufficient exposure to the language and inadequate practice in diverse contexts.

Inadequate practice is a pervasive issue. Ogundele (2015) highlights that the educational system in Nigeria often does not provide enough opportunities for learners to practice speaking French regularly. This lack of practice inhibits the development of oral proficiency and prevents learners from becoming confident and fluent speakers.

Lack of exposure to the French language and culture is another significant barrier. Eniola (2009) argues that many Nigerian learners do not have enough exposure to authentic French language use, which is crucial for developing a deeper understanding and appreciation of the language. This lack of exposure can lead to a superficial understanding of French and limit learners' ability to use it effectively in real-life situations.

Fear of making mistakes is a common issue among Nigerian learners of French. Olarewaju (2010) observes that many students are afraid of making errors when speaking French, which can prevent them from actively participating in conversations and practicing their speaking skills. This fear is often exacerbated by a lack of supportive and encouraging learning environments.

Grammar and syntax errors are also prevalent. Akinloye (2007) explains that Nigerian learners frequently struggle with the complexities of French grammar and syntax, leading to numerous errors in their spoken language. These errors can hinder communication and reduce the overall effectiveness of language use.

Cultural differences further complicate language learning for Nigerian students. Bamidele (2014) notes that the cultural differences between Nigeria and French-speaking countries can create misunderstandings and miscommunications. Understanding and navigating these cultural differences is essential for effective language use and for achieving a high level of oral proficiency.

The literature highlights a range of challenges faced by learners of French, both generally and specifically within the Nigerian context. Pronunciation difficulties, grammar complexity, lack of practice opportunities, lack of confidence, and cultural nuances are significant obstacles that impede learners' progress. In Nigeria, additional issues such as limited vocabulary, inadequate practice, lack of exposure, fear of making mistakes, grammar and syntax errors, and cultural differences further complicate the language acquisition process. Addressing these challenges through targeted interventions and supportive learning environments is crucial for enhancing the oral proficiency of French learners at Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) Zaria and beyond.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employs a mixed-methods approach to evaluate the oral proficiency of 400-level French learners at Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) Zaria. The methods include a survey, direct classroom observations, and a speaking exercise. This combination provides a comprehensive understanding of the learners' challenges and proficiency levels.

Participants

Twenty-two (22) learners enrolled in the Oral French class participated in this study. The participants were selected to provide a representative sample of advanced French learners at ABU Zaria.

Data Collection

Survey: The survey aimed to gather data on the learners' strategies for improving oral proficiency and their use of online resources. The survey was conducted over two class sessions. In the first session, participants completed a questionnaire that assessed their learning strategies, frequency of practice, and use of digital tools.

Direct Observation and Speaking Exercise: The second session involved a direct classroom observation where students participated in an oral expression exercise. This exercise required

students to engage in spontaneous speech on assigned topics. Their performances were evaluated based on criteria derived from the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the Diplôme d'Études en Langue Française (DEL F) assessment grids.

Data Analysis

Questionnaire Analysis: The responses to the questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistics. This analysis helped in identifying common strategies, frequency of use, and the perceived effectiveness of online resources among the learners.

Oral Practice Evaluation: The scores from the oral practice exercise were analyzed according to various criteria, including fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, vocabulary, and overall communicative competence. Each student's performance was graded using the CEFR and DEL F descriptors, providing a detailed assessment of their oral proficiency.

Procedures

Survey Administration:

In the first session, learners completed the questionnaire. The survey included questions on learning strategies, frequency of practice, and the use of online resources. In the second session, the speaking exercise was conducted. Learners were given topics to discuss spontaneously being observed and evaluated.

Direct Observation and Grading:

During the speaking exercise, instructors observed and took notes on each student's performance. The performances were then graded according to the CEFR and DEL F criteria, focusing on fluency, accuracy, confidence, pronunciation, vocabulary, and overall communicative competence.

Data Analysis:

The questionnaire data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to identify trends and common practices among the learners. The scores from the oral practice were analyzed to

evaluate the learners' proficiency levels across different criteria. This methodology provides a comprehensive evaluation of the oral proficiency of French learners at ABU Zaria, highlighting areas for improvement and informing targeted strategies for enhancing language instruction.

Descriptive Statistics from the Questionnaire

The questionnaire on oral proficiency among 400-level French learners at Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) Zaria provided valuable insights into various aspects of their language learning experiences. The questionnaire was divided into four sections: Oral Proficiency, Self-Assessment, Strategies, and Use of Online Applications and Resources. Each section was rated on a Likhert scale of 1 to 4, where 4 represents the highest level of agreement or proficiency and 1 represents the lowest.

Table 1: Classifications of the respondents by age ranges.

Age ranges of respondents	Frequency	Percent
18-20years	1	4.5
21-22years	1	4.5
23-24years	6	27.3
25-27years	5	22.7
28 years and above	9	40.9
Total	22	100.0

Table 2: Classifications of the respondents by type of gender.

Type of gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	6	27.3
Female	16	72.7
Total	22	100.0

Table 3: Opinions of the respondents on the oral proficiency (Section 1)

Sn		AL		ST		R		N		Me
		F.	%	F.	%	F.	%	F.	%	
1	I can introduce myself and others in French providing basic personal information	9	40.9	7	31.8	6	27.3	0	0	3.1
2	I can maintain a conversation on topics that familiar or personal interest	2	9.1	9	40.9	8	36.4	3	13.6	2.4
3	I can narrate a story or describe events in a simple coherent manner	2	9.1	7	31.8	10	45.5	3	13.6	2.3
4	I can explain why I have certain preferences or opinions in French	3	13.6	9	40.9	8	36.4	2	9.1	2.5
5	I can handle most situations likely to arise when travelling in a French speaking area	1	4.5	8	36.4	10	45.5	3	13.6	2.3

1. Never 2. Rarely 3. Sometimes 4. Always

Table 4: Opinions of the respondents on the self-assessment (Section 2)

Sn		A		ST		R		N		Me
		F.	%	F.	%	F.	%	F.	%	
1	I feel confident speaking French in everyday situation	5	22.7	5	22.7	11	50.0	1	4.5	2.6
2	I feel my pronunciation in French is generally clear and understandable to others	2	9.1	5	22.7	11	50.0	4	18.2	2.2
3	I have enough vocabulary to express myself on topics related to my interests and everyday life	0	0	10	45.5	9	40.9	3	13.6	2.3
4	I can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest	2	9.1	9	40.9	9	40.9	2	9.1	2.5
5	I can understand main points of clear standard speech on familiar matters regularly encounter in work, school leisure	3	13.6	13	59.1	4	18.2	2	9.1	2.7

1. Never 2. Rarely 3. Sometimes 4. Always

Table 5: Opinions of the respondents on the strategies for oral French (Section 3)

Sn		A		ST		R		N		Mean	Std
		F.	%	F.	%	F.	%	F.	%		
1	I regularly engage in conversations in French with classmates or native speakers	2	9.1	5	22.7	12	54.5	3	13.6	2.27	.83
2	I take notes of new vocabulary and expressions while practicing French	4	18.2	7	31.8	11	50.0	0	0	2.68	.78
3	I use audio materials to improve my listening comprehension	6	27.3	4	18.2	9	40.9	3	13.6	2.59	1.05
4	I participate in French speaking clubs or join conversation groups to practice speaking	2	9.1	3	13.6	13	59.1	4	18.2	2.14	.83
5	I seek out opportunities to practices speaking French outside of the classroom setting	5	22.7	2	9.1	10	45.5	5	22.7	2.32	1.08

1. Never 2. Rarely 3. Sometimes 4. Always

Table 6: Opinions of the respondents on the online resources (Section 4)

Sn		A		ST		R		N		Me
		F.	%	F.	%	F.	%	F.	%	
1	I engage with French social media social media, (Facebook groups/Instagram etc.) to immerse my in the language	5	22.7	6	27.3	8	36.4	3	13.6	2.5
2	I watch French videos (ex YOU-TUBE educational websites) to enhance my understanding and speaking abilities	4	18.2	8	36.4	10	45.5	0	0	2.7
3	I follow online courses or tutorials to improve my oral proficiency	3	13.6	3	13.6	9	40.9	7	31.8	2.0
4	I use language exchange platforms to practice speaking French with native speaker	1	4.5	0	0	4	18.2	17	77.3	1.3
5	I use online learning application (Duolingo, babble) to practice and improve my French	4	18.2	5	22.7	6	27.3	7	31.8	2.2

1. Never 2. Rarely 3. Sometimes 4. Always

Table 7: Descriptive statistics for four sections

Four sections	N	Range statistic	Mean	Standard Error	Standard deviation
Oral proficiency	22	2.60	2.57	.154	.723
Self-assessment	22	2.60	2.49	.153	.716
Strategies	22	2.60	2.40	.152	.714
Online resources	22	2.60	2.20	.147	.690

Interpretation:

Section 1: Oral Proficiency

The mean score of 2.57 for oral proficiency indicates that learners perceive their spoken French abilities to be slightly above average. This suggests that while they have some confidence in their oral skills, there is still significant room for improvement. The score reflects a moderate level of proficiency, highlighting the need for additional practice and support to help students reach higher levels of fluency and accuracy in their oral expression.

Section 2: Self-Assessment

With a mean score of 2.49, learners' self-assessment of their French language skills is just below the mid-point, suggesting a slightly lower level of confidence in their overall abilities. This score implies that students are aware of their limitations and areas that require further development. Enhancing self-assessment practices could involve more reflective exercises and feedback mechanisms to help learners accurately gauge and improve their skills.

Section 3: Strategies

The mean score of 2.40 for strategies indicates that learners employ language learning strategies at a moderate level. This score reflects a need for increased awareness and use of effective language learning strategies. Introducing students to a broader range of strategies, including metacognitive, cognitive, and social strategies, could improve their ability to learn and use French more effectively

Section 4: Use of Online Applications and Resources

A mean score of 2.20 for the use of online applications and resources suggests that learners are not fully utilizing digital tools and online resources to enhance their French language skills. This score, the lowest among the four sections, indicates a potential area for significant improvement. Encouraging the use of online platforms, apps, and other digital resources can provide additional opportunities for practice and exposure to authentic language use, thereby enhancing oral proficiency.

Summary

The descriptive statistics from the questionnaire reveal that learners of French at ABU Zaria have a moderate level of oral proficiency and employ learning strategies to some extent but lack confidence in their abilities and underutilize online resources. The mean scores for each section are as follows: Oral Proficiency: 2.57, Self-Assessment: 2.49, Strategies: 2.40 and the Use of Online Applications and Resources: 2.20.

These findings indicate that there is a considerable need for targeted interventions to boost learners' confidence, expand their strategic approach to language learning, and encourage greater use of digital tools. By addressing these areas, educators can help students achieve higher levels of oral proficiency and overall language competence.

Results (Direct observation)

The results from the direct observation and speaking exercise of 22 learners were systematically analyzed across four key criteria: Expression/Accuracy (Fluency), Confidence, Vocabulary, and Pronunciation.

Table 8: Rating Scale

Expression/fluency(EX)	4	3.5	3	2.5	2	1.5	1	0.5	0
Confidence(C)	3	2.5	2	1.5	1	0			
Vocabulary(LX)	3	2.5	2	1.5	1	0			
Pronunciation(P)	3	2.5	2	1.5	1	0			

Table 9 :Learners' scores in each of the criteria

Learner	EX	C	LX	P	Learner	EX	C	LX	
1	1.5	2	1.5	1.5	14	1.5	1	1	1
2	2.5	2	2	2	15	2	1.5	1	1.5
3	3	2.5	2.5	2.5	16	2	2.5	1.5	2
4	1.5	2	1	1	17	2	1	1.5	1.5
5	2	1.5	1.5	1.5	18	2	1.5	1	1.5
6	1	1.5	1	1	19	3	2	2.5	2
7	1.5	1.5	2	1.5	20	2	1.5	1.5	1.5
8	1.5	2	2	1.5	21	2	1.5	2	1.5
9	3	2	2.5	2.5	22	2	1.5	1.5	1.5
10	2.5	2	1.5	1.5					
11	2	2	1	1.5					

Each criterion was evaluated based on specific point systems, and the performance of the learners was categorized as above average, average, or below average.

1. **Expression/Accuracy: (Fluency)** Out of 4 points, we observed the following: Above Average: 5, Average: 10, Below Average: 7. Analysis: The distribution indicates that a majority of the learners (15 out of 22) fall within the average to above-average range for fluency, suggesting that while most students can express themselves reasonably well, a significant number (7 learners) struggle with maintaining fluency and accuracy. This highlights a need for focused practice on speaking fluidly and accurately without hesitation.

2. **Confidence Scale:** Out of 3 points, we observe the following: Above Average: 10, Average: 10, Below Average: 2. Analysis: Confidence levels are relatively high among the learners, with 20 out of 22 learners rated as average or above average. This suggests that most students are

reasonably confident in their speaking abilities. The low number of students in the below-average category indicates that confidence, while generally good, can be further reinforced to ensure all students feel secure in their speaking abilities.

3. Vocabulary Scale: Out of 3 points we observe the following: Above Average: 7, Average: 9, Below Average: 6. Analysis: Vocabulary usage among the learners is moderately balanced, with 16 out of 22 learners falling within the average to above-average range. However, a notable portion of the students (6 learners) were rated below average, indicating gaps in vocabulary knowledge. This suggests that there is room for improvement in expanding the learners' lexical repertoire to enhance their overall communicative competence.

4. Pronunciation Scale: Out of 3 points we observe the following : Above Average: 6 ,Average: 13, Below Average: 3. Analysis: Pronunciation skills are predominantly average among the learners, with 19 out of 22 learners rated as average or above average. Only a small number of learners (3) struggle significantly with pronunciation. This indicates that while the general pronunciation skills are acceptable, there is still a need for targeted practice to achieve clearer and more accurate pronunciation for all students.

Discussion

The results indicate several key areas for targeted improvement in the oral proficiency of 400 level learners of French at ABU Zaria. There is a need for more activities that promote spontaneous speaking and practice under real-time conditions to help students develop greater fluency and accuracy. While confidence levels are generally good, continued encouragement and opportunities for public speaking and presentations can further bolster students' confidence. Efforts should be made to expand learners' vocabulary through diverse reading materials, thematic vocabulary exercises, and practical usage scenarios. Pronunciation practice should be integrated into the curriculum, with specific exercises focusing on phonetic accuracy, stress patterns, and intonation.

Overall, the findings from this study not only highlight the specific strengths and weaknesses of the learners at ABU Zaria but also provide a framework for addressing similar

challenges faced by French language learners across Nigerian universities. By implementing the recommended strategies, educators can enhance the oral proficiency of their students, ensuring they are better equipped for academic and real-world communication.

Conclusion and recommendations

The evaluation of oral proficiency among 400-level French learners at Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) Zaria reveals critical insights into the challenges and opportunities for enhancing spoken French skills. Through a combination of survey data, classroom observations, and literature review, it is evident that while students exhibit a foundational understanding of French, significant barriers to fluency remain. These barriers include limited exposure to authentic spoken French, insufficient practice opportunities, reliance on traditional teaching methods, lack of confidence, fear of making mistakes, pronunciation difficulties, and limited vocabulary.

The use of online resources and innovative learning strategies emerges as a promising avenue for improvement. Students who actively engaged with digital tools and interactive platforms demonstrated notable progress in their oral skills, underscoring the potential of technology-enhanced learning environments. Additionally, language immersion programs, active participation in French language clubs, and seeking opportunities to converse in French with peers and native speakers outside the classroom are vital methods for further improving oral proficiency. These strategies provide practical, real-world contexts for language use, which are crucial for developing fluency and confidence.

Based on the findings, several recommendations are proposed to enhance oral proficiency in French at ABU Zaria. First, incorporating more interactive and communicative activities within the curriculum can provide students with practical speaking experience. Second, leveraging online resources and multimedia tools can offer additional practice outside the classroom. Third, continuous professional development for instructors on the latest language teaching methodologies can ensure that pedagogical approaches remain dynamic and effective. Fourth, encouraging students to engage in language immersion programs, join French

language clubs, and seek opportunities for conversation with peers and native speakers can significantly bolster their speaking abilities.

Ultimately, this study highlights the importance of a multifaceted approach to language instruction, integrating both traditional and modern techniques to foster a more robust learning experience. By addressing the identified challenges and implementing the recommended strategies, ABU Zaria can significantly enhance the oral proficiency of its French learners. Moreover, the insights gained from this study are applicable not only to learners at ABU but also to French language students across Nigerian universities, providing a valuable framework for improving oral proficiency nationwide.

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